

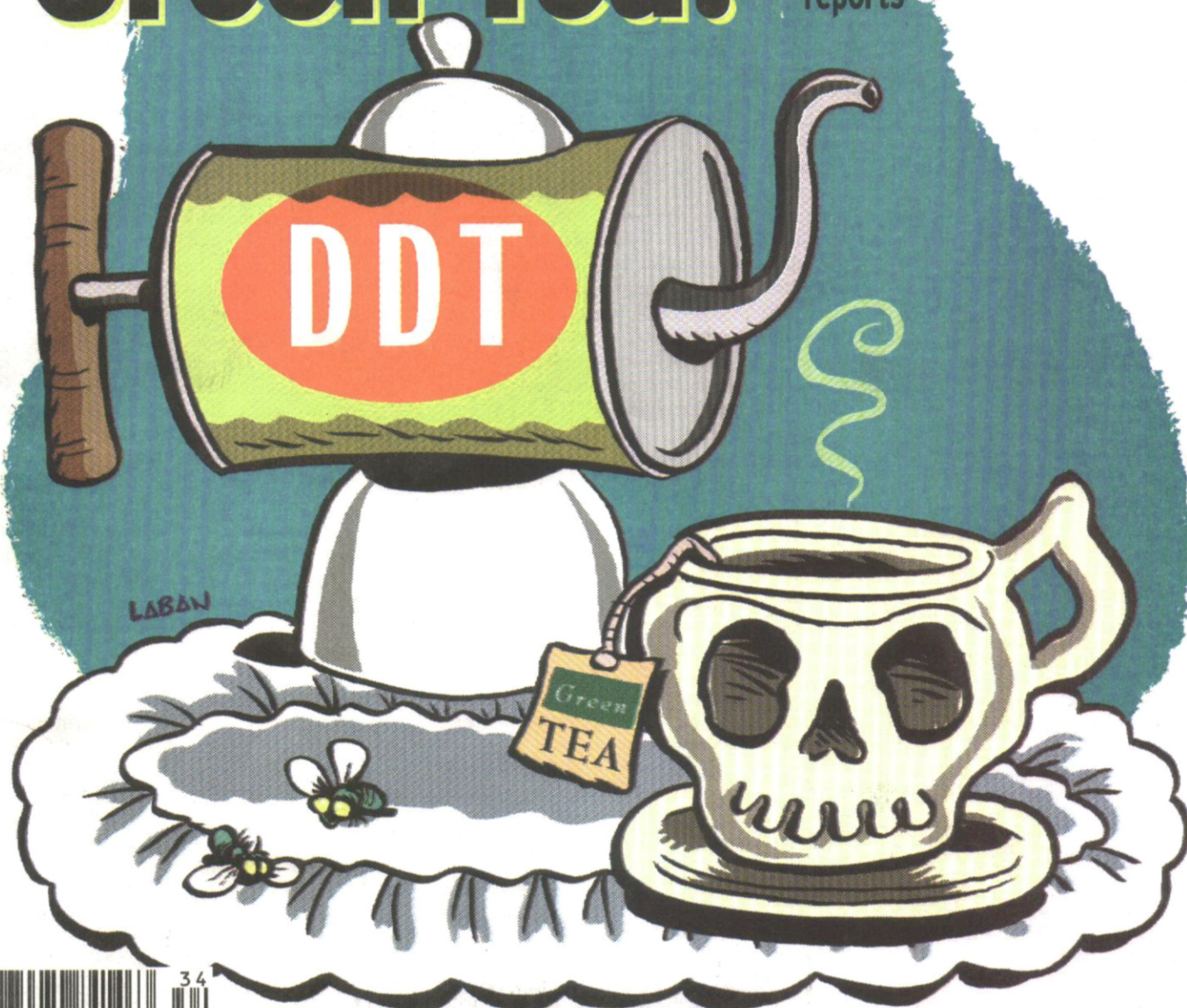
# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

August 21, 2000

## What's in Your Green Tea?

Frances Cerra Whittelsey  
reports



\$2.50 Canada \$3.50

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG  
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



"... with liberty and justice for all"

James Weinstein  
Founding Editor and Publisher

**Editor:** Joel Bleifuss  
**Managing Editor:** Craig Aaron  
**Senior Editors:** Patricia Aufderheide, David Moberg, Salim Muwakkil  
**Culture Editor:** Joe Knowles  
**News Editor:** Kristin Kolb-Angelbeck  
**Contributing Editors:** Terry J. Allen, Linda DeLibero, Barbara Ehrenreich, Laura Flanders, Annette Fuentes, David Futrelle, Juan Gonzalez, Miles Harvey, George Hodak, Doug Ireland, Diana Johnstone, Pete Karman, Scott McLemee, Dave Mulcahey, Jeffrey St. Clair, Jane Slaughter, Jason Vest, Fred Weir, G. Pascal Zachary  
**Proofreaders:** Alan Kimmel, Norman Wishner  
**Interns:** Jennifer Belmont, Elizabeth Brennan, Matthew Lagod, Sandrine Rastello, Kristie Reilly  
**Art Director:** Jim Rinnert  
**Associate Art Director:** Steve Anderson  
**Illustrator:** Terry LaBan  
**Publisher:** Beth Schulman  
**Associate Publisher:** Julie Fain  
**Circulation Manager:** Luli Buxton  
**Advertising Director:** Steve Anderson

*In These Times* (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 24, No. 19) went to press on July 21 for newsstand sales August 7 to August 21, 2000.

The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright ©2000 by the Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Copies of *In These Times* contract with the National Writers Union are available upon request. Contact the union at (212) 254-0279 or <http://www.nwu.org>.

**Subscriptions** are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). Call (800) 827-0270.

**All correspondence should be sent to:** 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.  
Phone: (773) 772-0100. Fax: (773) 772-4180.  
E-mail: [itt@inthesetimes.com](mailto:itt@inthesetimes.com).

Publisher does not assume liability for **unsolicited manuscripts** or material. Manuscripts unaccompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned. **All letters** received by *In These Times* become property of the magazine. We reserve the right to print letters in condensed form.

For back issues and advertising rates, call toll free (888) READ-ITT. Available back issues are \$3 each, \$5 each overseas. Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through the IPA International Sales Cooperative. For more information call (415) 447-4284, fax (415) 447-4281, or e-mail [monika@bigtoppubs.com](mailto:monika@bigtoppubs.com).



## Letters

### China Trade-offs

David Moberg argues that Congress' approval of the bill to permanently normalize trade relations with China eliminated U.S. "leverage over China" by "symbolically" accommodating itself to the human rights violations of an authoritarian regime ("Trading Places," June 26). While he points out the need for environmental protection and workers rights, he dismisses one of the major aspects of the debate: the fact that congressional criticism has had little effect on China's treatment of its dissidents.

As was the case with Mexico, Beijing has always been confident that the annual U.S. review of its trade status would consistently and inevitably end in renewal, all but eliminating the clout of Congress' "stick." In addition, there is a real lack of evidence suggesting that China upheld its human rights "guarantees" any more due to the minute threat of removing its "most favored nation" status. Even the State Department reports that "serious problems remain" with China's human rights record.

The PNTR bill, however, provides a unique opportunity to gently guide China's transition toward a more democratic political atmosphere. Trade means that more U.S. goods are sold across the Pacific, forcing inefficient U.S. companies to become more competitive and benefiting consumers worldwide. Trade brings less tangible goods as well—cultural values, for example, that can promote human rights and even environmental protection. No government, however powerful, can suppress civilian discontent forever; like a pot of heated water, political rebellion will only boil over if it is fueled by a fever for change. PNTR is just such a flame, and as such is far from accommodation—it is a proactive attempt to spark reform.

**Dan Nemser**  
Washington

Once again, David Moberg is apologizing for the ruling elites. Defending the Democratic Party, Moberg proclaims, "it would be a mistake to abandon the battle for the party's direction." Moberg goes on to say that unions "should insist that Democrats make strong commitments to workers rights and environmental safeguards." But "insisting" is not going to change the structure of political and economic power.

The tyrannical Democrat/Republican duopoly, as Ralph Nader has joked, is a corporate monster with two heads wearing different make-up. When will it be time to abandon the Democratic Party?

**David Ross**  
Arcata, California

**David Moberg responds:** Congressional review has had limited impact on China in part because Congress has always favored commercial relations over workers

or human rights, but rapidly increasing trade and investment over the past decade hasn't improved conditions much either. The main values that trade promotes are commercial. China's shift to market values and abandonment of social security will continue to generate rebellion, but as much against inequities of the new economy as against the repression of the old regime. Regarding Dan Nemser's claim that competition will generate improvements in American business efficiency, the favored solution seems to be shifting factories to China—which is precisely what American corporations wanted from PNTR, as the Wall Street Journal reported right after the House vote.

According to David Ross, forcing the Democrats to fight for laudable goals is now apologizing for ruling elites. But giving up efforts to influence the Democrats (or the Republicans, for that matter)—even for people who continue to harbor hopes for third parties—is simply abandoning real political struggle in favor of a fantasy life. After all, a majority of House Democrats voted against PNTR, an indication of how the party is divided on globalization and workers rights.

### More Nader vs. Gore

I was saddened by Joel Bleifuss' editorial "Face Reality" (June 12). As a self-anointed shrewd political realist, Bleifuss implies that progressives who support Ralph Nader are unserious twits who jog and put soy milk in their lattes, while serious progressives do the smart thing and vote for Al Gore. He seems to think that voting for Nader and working for the election of progressive legislators, including Democrats, at all levels are somehow mutually exclusive actions.

"False Reality" would have been a more apt title for this article, because the truth is that the only way progressives can ever regain any influence in the Democratic Party is by deserting it in large enough numbers to scare the hell out of the cynical hacks who now control it. What Bleifuss refers to as "the give-and-take of real politics" is in reality giving Al Gore your vote and getting taken for a ride—again.

In the 1992 campaign, Gore was fond of quoting the old definition of insanity: "Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result." Bleifuss has reason to fear for his sanity.

**Marvin Gluck**  
Topanga, California

Bore shouldn't be putting the election in the hands of Gush, the worst possible choice in years. Why doesn't he stop taking votes from Nader, the more qualified candidate?

**Peter Grant**  
Bristol, Vermont

For more on this debate from *In These Times* contributing editor Pete Karman and others, visit [www.inthesetimes.com](http://www.inthesetimes.com).

# In These Times

Volume 24, Number 19

August 21, 2000

www.inthesetimes.com

**2 Editorial** By Joel Bleifuss  
Toxic shock.

**3 News**  
Oil workers' injuries soar along with gas prices, the BLM's unusual sale to protect wilderness in Nevada, and the water fight on the West Bank.

**6 Appall-o-Meter** By David Futrelle

**8 Profile** By Ben Winters  
Raceman cometh.

**9 Viewpoint** By Kip Sullivan  
HMOs' invasion of privacy.

## Features

**10 Why I'm Voting for Nader ...**  
By Robert McChesney

**12 ... And Why I'm Not**  
By James Weinstein

**16 What's in Your Green Tea?**  
By Frances Cerra Whittelsey  
An *In These Times* special investigation.

**20 Fox Shocks the World**  
By Rick Rockwell  
Now comes the hard part for Mexico's new president. Plus: A new chance for Chiapas?

**23 Tijuana Troubles**  
By David Bacon  
NAFTA is failing workers.

**25 Unions Get Religion**  
By David Moberg

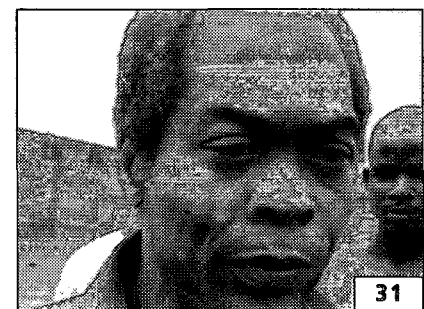
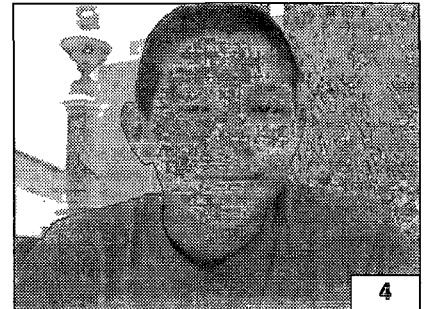
**28 Give It Away**  
By David Graeber  
The Maussians are coming.

**31 Good Fela**  
By Hillary Frey  
The music, politics and legend of Nigeria's Fela Kuti.

**34 Time's Arrow**  
By Carl Bromley  
A Chilean dissident finds the cinema in Proust.

**38 Mission: Impossible 3**  
By Bill Boisvert  
Goodbye, Mr. Secret Agent ...

Cover: Terry LaBan



## Toxic Shock

By Joel Bleifuss

**T**he pesticide DDT is one of a range of widely used man-made toxins that continue to take an incalculable toll on human health. As Frances Cerra Whittelsey notes in this issue's cover story on DDT contamination of green tea, we cannot escape exposure to chlorinated compounds since they persist for years in the environment. But we can curtail their use and prevent further harm from being done.

Chlorinated compounds, including DDT (and 33 other organochlorine pesticides), PCBs and dioxin, mimic the function of natural hormones and wreak havoc with the network of glands, tissues and cells known as the endocrine system. These hormone mimickers insinuate themselves into cells in the same way a hormone would, and thus interfere with the biological switches that regulate growth, development and behavior. As Theo Colborn, a scientist at the World Wildlife Fund wrote in a 1993 report published by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences: "It is now suspected that increases in the incidence of numerous pathologies in men and women may be related to exposure to pesticides and other endocrine disrupting chemicals."

The research of Colborn and her colleagues raised public awareness and set the stage for current international efforts to ban endocrine-disrupting chemicals. For the past two years, representatives from 121 countries have been negotiating a treaty under the auspices of the U.N. Environment Program that would ban the use of 12 persistent organic pollutants (POPs), including 8 pesticides (among which is DDT), two industrial chemicals (hexachlorobenzene and PCBs) and two industrial byproducts (dioxin and furans).

While the Clinton administration has voiced public support for the POPs treaty and banning "the dirty dozen," its negotiating stance indicates more concern for protecting chemical corporations than the natural environment.

During the negotiations, the administration has balked at the use of the word

"elimination" in the treaty section on industrial toxic by-products like dioxin unless it is qualified by the phrase "where technically and economically feasible." If the treaty called for absolute elimination, the United States would be required to implement pollution prevention programs like those in Europe to curtail the creation of dioxin here.

Yet the Environmental Protection Agency admits that a major source of dioxin is the open burning of PVC plastic. The obvious way to stop the creation of such dioxin is to stop using PVC, and switch to a safer plastic. But the administration is reluctant to accept "materials substitution" provisions in the treaty, because that would require a change in U.S. environmental law and cost the chemical corporations money.

U.S. negotiators also want to restrict references of the "precautionary principle" to the POP treaty preamble, keeping it out of the section that addresses the evaluation of new chemicals. In 1998, an international gathering of environmental scientists, activists

and government officials defined the precautionary principle this way: "When an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof."

For its part the administration supports the industry-preferred practice of counting the bodies and then calculating the danger, otherwise known as "scientific risk assessment."

Finally, a U.S. State Department communiqué to the European Union,

**The United States shows more concern for chemical companies than the environment.**

which was leaked to Greenpeace, indicates that the United States is extremely reluctant to accept treaty provisions that would require financial assistance from the countries and corporations that originally created and/or marketed the POPs. Such funds could help the developing world make the transition to safer alternatives, such as malaria control mechanisms that could replace DDT. Without such financial support, many developing countries will refuse to go along with the treaty. ■

Terry LaBan





## Safety Last

As oil prices soar, so do the number of deadly accidents

By Dave Lindorff

This summer's high oil prices are hurting more than consumers' pocketbooks. Union officials and insurance companies say they're harming workers too, as oil producers—drilling, pipeline and refinery companies alike—push production to the max to sell as much of the high-priced black gold as possible before prices drop.

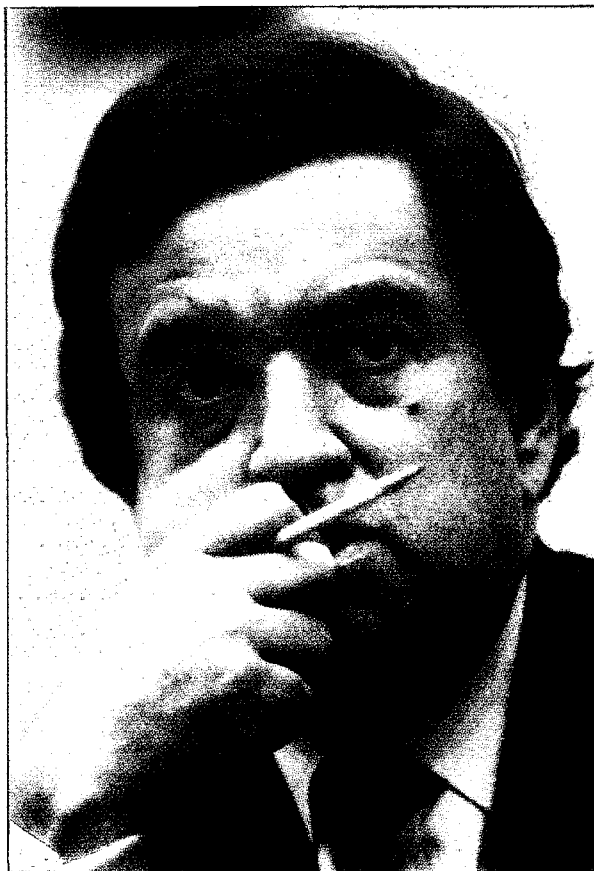
The problem is twofold: Oil companies have hired poorly trained employees to beef up shrunken workforces and re-opened wells that were too inefficient to operate a year ago when oil prices were less than \$20 a barrel. According to John Beckett, senior vice president of Zurich Global Energy, a casualty insurer for oil field operations, 330 more oil rigs are operating in the United States this year. That's an increase of nearly 30 percent at a time when the oil production workforce has significantly decreased.

Beckett says there is a direct relationship between increased oil production and a 10 percent jump this year in death-benefit payments and workers' compensation claims for on-the-job injuries. "You get rigs erected with problems like railings missing," Beckett explains. "You also get short-staffing because most of these companies have already let a lot of trained people go, so they'll start operating a rig with seven people instead of eight. And you get

unseasoned workers hired who aren't as skilled—and they make mistakes."

As oil prices slumped during the mid-'90s, oil companies laid off large numbers of workers, many of whom have long since either retired or moved on to other jobs and locales. A wave of mergers among the major companies also led to widespread layoffs of skilled, unionized workers. Now the major companies are increasingly subcontracting out to smaller independent firms, which are typically nonunion.

The government has made the situation even worse. Not long ago, the oil industry was actually encouraged by the Clinton administration to ramp up production, even at the risk of downplaying safety concerns. As heating oil prices rose late last winter, Energy Secretary Bill Richardson called on oil companies to delay scheduled maintenance work on production facilities to quickly boost supplies. The move was immediately condemned by Robert E. Wages, executive vice president of the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers Union (PACE), who warned that delaying maintenance schedules "poses an imminent danger to all involved."



STEPHEN JAFFE/AFP

Energy Secretary Bill Richardson advised oil companies to boost production at the expense of worker safety.

In a letter to Richardson, Wages noted that two serious refinery accidents in recent years—an incident at a Unocal facility in Lemont, Illinois and another at a Shell refinery in Norco, Louisiana—were traced to those companies' failure to perform scheduled maintenance. And a 1999 accident at a Tosco refinery in Martinez, California occurred because the company had workers perform maintenance on high-temperature and pressure units while they were in operation, in order to minimize any disruption in production. Four workers died and one was seriously injured. "Delayed maintenance is not something the government needs to be supporting," Wages wrote. "The price in death, destruction, pollution and lost production when one of these refineries explodes because maintenance wasn't done more than cancels out any possible marginal benefit to the consumer."

Beckett insists that most corporate risk managers, who generally work out

## Ross Regroups after Failed Candidacy

Chicago-based Raúl Ross Pineda had a long and busy day on July 3, punctuated by connections to the official Mexican electoral Web site awaiting the returns. Then the final results of the election came in: Ross, the Mexican congressional candidate profiled in our August 7 issue, had lost his bid by 3 percentage points.

Despite Ross' loss, another expatriate candidate, Los Angeles-based Eddie Varon Levy, did succeed in becoming the first Mexican living in the United States to be elected in his home country. He is a member of the PRI, which lost the presidency for the first time in 71 years.

Ross is now trying to organize a September meeting between Mexican President-elect Vicente Fox and a delegation of Mexicans living in the United States. His goal is to obtain Fox's formal endorsement of a legislative package granting Mexicans abroad the right to vote, an issue he supported during his campaign.

If the bill passes, all Mexican citizens—regardless of where they live—could vote in the 2003 Congressional elections. It also could prove to be a new opportunity for Ross' political ambitions.

Sandrino Rastello

of company finance offices, are anxious to take steps to ensure safety on the job. After all, a few deaths or major compensation claims at a company doing \$100 million a year in revenues can raise insurance premiums by as much as \$1 million a year. But at \$38 a barrel, there is also the temptation to make money fast while the price is right. "With all that money there for the taking, the fear of problems goes away," Beckett says. "Companies just want to get their wells up and running."

The Department of Energy's quick-fix solution for boosting oil supplies at workers' expense should come as little surprise. The oil industry has been a significant campaign contributor to Democratic candidates, especially Clinton and Gore. Occidental Petroleum, which loaned the Democratic National Committee \$100,000 back in 1992 for the Clinton/Gore inaugural celebration, also ponied up a \$50,000 contribution to the Democratic Party after one of Gore's now infamous phone solicitations from the White House.

Gore himself is a trustee for Occidental stock worth some \$500,000. (The Gore family received the stock while the vice president's father, Albert Gore Sr., was working as a \$500,000-a-year executive for the company.) As of July 1, Gore had received \$100,000 in donations from oil industry sources. And while that sum is dwarfed by the \$1.5 million in donations received by George W. Bush, the oil industry also donated \$1.4 million to the Democratic Party's soft-money campaign fund, most of which ends up being used to support the party's presidential candidate.

A total of 66 oil and gas companies have contributed to the Gore campaign. The Democratic Party has received contributions from 28 oil and gas companies, topped by \$268,000 from BP Amoco, \$197,750 from Enron, \$180,500 from Chevron and \$55,000 from Exxon Mobil. (Both BP Amoco and Exxon Mobil completed controversial megamergers during the Clinton/Gore administration's second term). All of this money may explain why Gore has been strong on condemnation of oil and gas companies, but short on hard-hitting solutions to high gas prices—and why the administration has done so little to protect workers from the growing safety threats posed by increased oil production. ■



TIM ATHERTON 1999/ PICTUREDESK INTERNATIONAL

**Lost World:** On the streets of Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, homeless street children are a common sight. They work the market area shining shoes, and hawk gum and candy. At night, they congregate at garbage dumps to scavenge for food. Most of the kids are addicted to glue, sniffing it from old baby-food jars.

Since Hurricane Mitch devastated the Honduran economy in 1998, the number of homeless children has risen dramatically. So have their deaths: 302 street children have been murdered in Tegucigalpa over the past two years. A report released in June by the human rights group Casa Alianza blames the police. Casa Alianza has documented that at least 36 murders were carried out by the Tegucigalpa police. According to the London *Guardian*, the children are viewed as a nuisance and suspected of committing petty crimes. The police are "disposing of" the children as part of a "social cleansing program."

Casa Alianza is now calling on the U.N. human rights commission to investigate the murders and police activities.

## Sale of the Century

An unusual government auction helps preserve the Nevada wilderness

By Geoff Schumacher

LAS VEGAS—Urban sprawl may be the bane of 21st-century American life, but federal land managers in Nevada have found an innovative way to make it work for the environment. The Bureau of Land Management owns tens of thousands of acres of undeveloped land in the fast-growing Las Vegas area. Rather than trying to manage the hodgepodge of large and small

parcels, most of them surrounded by development, the BLM has targeted them for sale.

In the past, the federal agency engineered massive, complicated land swaps in which a developer seeking a prime BLM tract would buy up environmentally sensitive areas elsewhere and exchange them for the land. But the process came under heavy fire in the mid-'90s, when an investigation showed that the government was losing millions of dollars in lopsided swaps favoring developers. Nevada's congressional delegation came up with a solution: auction the BLM's urban holdings in Las Vegas to the highest bidders and use the proceeds to buy valuable habitat and riparian areas held privately. The auction proceeds stay in Nevada rather than being deposited in the federal treasury.



While the land sales will contribute to urban sprawl in metropolitan Las Vegas, advocates argue that they serve a larger purpose: taking environmentally sensitive tracts out of private hands. The project is designed to reshuffle Western lands to bring some logic to a checkerboard of public and private ownership that dates to the construction of the transcontinental railroads and does not have any connection to the needs of endangered species or efforts to preserve wilderness.

Las Vegas environmentalist Jeff van Ee bemoans the sprawl that causes traffic congestion and air pollution alerts in the city, but he says the BLM's urban lands on the auction block would have been sold anyway. "The pressure has always been there to sell these lands," he says, "and in the past the proceeds would disappear into the federal treasury. And once they disappeared, it was difficult to get federal money to buy environmentally sensitive lands in Nevada. Now the money stays within Nevada."

On July 5, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt announced the first wave of expenditures from auction proceeds. He unveiled a \$24.1 million shopping list of private lands throughout Nevada, almost \$10 million in capital improvements to federal recreation areas and a planned wetlands park near Las Vegas. Federal agencies plan to acquire three separate private properties within the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area west of Las Vegas, as well as critical habitat throughout Nevada for the Southwestern willow flycatcher, Moapa dace fish and Amargosa pupfish.

Nevada BLM officials say they've only just begun. "We've sold 2 percent of the land we have available for sale," says state director Bob Abbey. "This is a long-term project that will allow us to do many wonderful things in Nevada."

And it's a project that has other Western states salivating. Sen. Pete Domenici (R-New Mexico) has drafted a bill to expand the program to 11 other Western states. "A lot of eyes are watching to see if it works here," says Mike Dwyer, who administers the fledgling program for the BLM.

Meanwhile, the only major concern raised so far is how the auctions contribute to Las Vegas' sprawl. While many of the BLM parcels are vacant lots in the urban core, others are on the city edges.

## Road Warriors

A much-hyped Independence Day show of force by Wise-Use advocates demanding the reopening of a U.S. Forest Service road in northeastern Nevada fizzled when only about 250 showed up, rather than the promised 5,000, according to the Elko County Sheriff's Department estimate.

And heated talk of a conflict with federal authorities did not materialize as the right-wing protesters chose to wave flags and listen to John Phillip Sousa songs rather than reconstruct the road that environmentalists want to keep closed to protect endangered bull trout in the adjacent Jarbidge River. The protesters wrapped chains around a large boulder blocking the road and moved it to the side, allowing a pickup truck to ramble a few hundred yards down the 1.5-mile path before stopping and turning around.

The Wise-Use activists, calling themselves the "Jarbidge Shovel Brigade," began sending shovels to Elko, the nearest city, months before the Fourth of July to protest the Forest Service's stance that the washed-out road should not be repaired and reopened for vehicular use (see "Dirt Road Rage," March 6). Wise-

Use organizers from Montana to Arizona tried to turn the regional dispute, in which local government leaders contend they have a legal right to fix the road, into a national rally against federal land-use policies, including the Clinton administration's pending plan to cease road-building on Forest Service lands across the country. Activists had said they fully intended to use the shovels to begin restoring the road, defying federal warnings.

Fearing the worst, the Forest Service moved in June to defuse the conflict by offering to reconstruct the road in a way that protects the bull trout. Many times in the past, the road had washed out during heavy rains, sending sediment into the river and harming the fish, which number between 800 and 1,500. Trout Unlimited, a conservation group, strongly objects to the proposed compromise. "This is not only bad for fish and bad for the Jarbidge River, this is terrible public policy," says Jeff Curtis, Western conservation director of Trout Unlimited. "Rewarding people who refuse to play by the rules will only encourage further actions against the rule of law. This action will reward bad behavior."

**Geoff Schumacher**

For example, the BLM has 7,500 contiguous acres at the north end of the Las Vegas Valley that it intends to sell for residential developments for at least 75,000 people. Jane Feldman of the Sierra Club's Las Vegas chapter says no one has figured out how those people are going to get around town. "We need a regional transportation plan," she says, "and I don't think our local transportation agency is up to it."

Exacerbating long commutes could spell trouble for Las Vegas, which is facing the prospect of sanctions from the Environmental Protection Agency for failing to clean up its air. Still, Feldman supports the auctions. She points out that while the BLM is selling its lands inside Las Vegas, the metro area remains surrounded by public lands that won't be sold, creating a natural growth boundary similar to Portland, Oregon's greenbelt.

Van Ee's only complaint is that little attention was given to the immediate Las Vegas area. "They need to use at least some of the money from the land sales to create a more livable Las Vegas," he says. "I'm told that's coming, but it's not coming fast enough." ■

## Water Wars

A botched deal leaves  
Palestinians high and dry

By Charmaine Seitz

JERUSALEM—As temperatures in the West Bank hover just above 100 degrees, water is on everyone's mind. Three years of scant rain have dried out the area and now a previously scarce resource has become paltry.

But reports of the drought's severity pale in comparison with preliminary studies showing that crucial Palestinian water resources, as accorded by Israeli-Palestinian agreements, are already overexploited. The United States, in an overzealous effort to provide Palestinians with water and improve the climate for peacemaking, may be partly at fault.

When Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967, all control of local water resources was turned over to the Israeli military administration. By the time Palestinians and Israel signed an initial

peace agreement in 1993, the Israeli water carrier was pumping 80 percent of underground reserves to Israeli citizens in Israel and the West Bank settlements. The rest of the water resources were channeled to Palestinians, allotting them only one third of Israeli per capita use.

During interim peace talks, the two sides agreed in 1995 that Palestinians had the right to use a limited amount of water from the eastern aquifer, the only underground aquifer lying completely inside the West Bank. The other two West Bank aquifers were left until final status talks, which were underway at Camp David as *In These Times* went to press. At the time of the initial agreement, Israel said that these other aquifers were already overexploited by its own pumping and hence, not much use to Palestinians anyway.



**Ali Raba draws water from his well in the village of Tawanah in the West Bank. Raba is fortunate. Thousands of Palestinians have no fresh water in their villages and are dependent on Israeli authorities to sell it to them.**

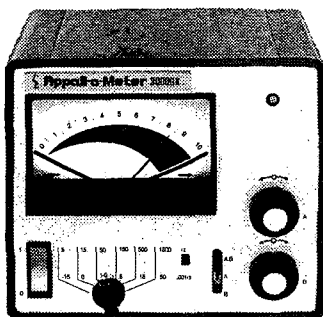
Israeli engineers hypothesized that the eastern aquifer could produce up to 21 billion gallons of water annually, in addition to the water already being extracted. But that amount still would not bring the 2 million West Bankers up to World Health Organization standards for healthy living.

Further, Palestinian engineers suspect-

ed that the Israeli estimates of the aquifer's possibilities were too high, but their resources were limited—all real data remained classified by Israel throughout the negotiations. The Palestinians eventually accepted the data and agreed to Israel's terms.

Since then, Palestinians slowly have discovered that the eastern aquifer has little to offer them, and may already be overused. Soon after the agreement, Palestinian tests found that as much as

60 percent of the aquifer's water is contaminated by salty springs near the Dead Sea. A July report by the Millennium Engineering Group, a U.S. firm, estimates that only 25 percent of the water from the eastern aquifer can be used safely. The Palestinian Water Authority is now concerned that the aquifer could be in



### **Tough Sell 9.2**

Faced with a persistent image problem—due to its long, ugly history of atrocities—the Guatemalan army has enlisted the help of a small local ad agency called Vice-Versa in an attempt to show that it's really on the side of peace these days, four years after a cease-fire with rebel forces and two years after a U.N. truth commission found the army guilty of torture and genocide in the long civil war. Rodrigo Mendoza, creative director of Vice-Versa, admits he has his work cut out for him, but recently told Reuters he's "drawn [to] the challenge" of presenting some of the world's most notorious warmongers in a different light. Vice-Versa's ad campaign, Reuters reports, features "images of doves bearing olive branches perched on camouflage-painted combat helmets."

## **Appall-o-Meter** By David Futrelle

### **Dead Letter Office 6.2**

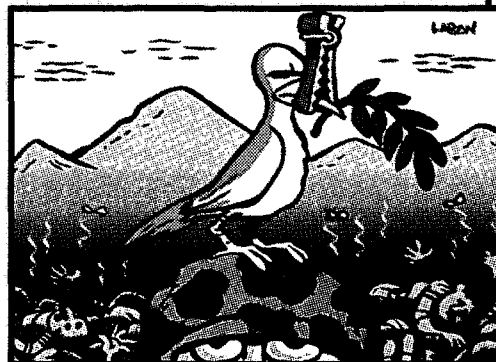
The late William Reynolds of London recently received notice that he would no longer be getting a housing benefit from his local borough council—because he was dead. "Your Council Tax Benefit has been stopped from 17 April 2000 because there had been a change in your circumstances," noted a letter sent to the deceased by Capita Business Systems, the housing benefit contractor for the Lambeth Borough Council. "The change is because you are dead."

According to London's *Daily Telegraph*, the notice urged the dead man to call if he wished to appeal the decision.

### **The Big Chill 5.9**

FM-2030 is dead. For now, at least. An eccentric futurist who legally changed his name to FM-2030 because

he was sure he would live to see that date, the former F.M. Esfandiari recently died at the age of 69. But his body has been frozen and stored in a tank at Alcor Life Extension Foundation in Scottsdale, Arizona, awaiting the scientific breakthrough that will ultimately bring him back to life. FM-2030 was busily revising his book "Countdown to Immortality" when pancreatic cancer struck him down. The indefatigable futurist, Bridge News reports, was a bitter public opponent of nationalism, competition and the pancreas, which he once denounced as a "stupid, dumb, wretched organ."



TERRY LABAN



dire trouble and further drilling as planned "might be disastrous."

But eager to encourage regional peace by aiding Palestinian development, the United States has continued with its massive efforts to expand Palestinian water production, despite indications as early as 1998 that the eastern aquifer was already overexploited. Four years ago, USAID pledged \$211 million to the project over an 18-year period. Another \$52 million in loans is coming from the World Bank and the European Investment Bank. So far, USAID has directed the digging of four new production wells and this year will commence the drilling of 11 more wells that can extract 13.2 billion gallons of water a year. But if the aquifer can only yield as much as 5.2 billion gallons annually, according to the Millennium report, the USAID project may be for naught.

From the beginning, Palestinians and the planning organizations did not have complete control over the choice of new well sites. "The Israeli company Tahal conducted their own scientific research," says Palestinian Water Authority project manager Ihab Barghothi. "They pinpointed 11 locations where Palestinians can drill."

While Barghothi argues that the use of Tahal's data did not jeopardize the well-selection process, other engineers disagree. All Palestinian wells must go through an extensive Israeli approval

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



process by 22 Israeli ministries, including the Ministry of Defense. Some well sites—the best well sites, according to USAID's own engineers—were not accepted. Further, USAID and the planners were so eager to get water flowing to Palestinians that "the assumption of water availability was not tested," says Ayman Rabi, executive

director of the Palestinian Hydrology Group, a local think tank. Millennium's testing of the four wells and their impact on the aquifer will not commence until next year.

Meanwhile, Israeli settlements continue to extract an estimated 10.5 billion gallons from the eastern aquifer annually, as allotted in the interim agreements. The

Palestinian negotiators failed miserably in their demands that Israel stop pumping water from the eastern aquifer. One Millennium engineer says that the removal of the settlements from the eastern basin would mean the end of Palestinian water problems for some time, since even today's estimates of the eastern aquifer are enough to sustain the Palestinians who live there.

Now it appears that the Palestinians may be left high and dry—as well as several million dollars in debt. ■

## Living Wage Passes in San Francisco

After a two-year struggle, San Francisco is poised to adopt one of the country's most far-reaching living-wage ordinances.

The Minimum Compensation Ordinance, which all 11 members of the city Board of Supervisors co-sponsored after Mayor Willie Brown introduced it, would increase wages and benefits for 21,500 low-wage workers in San Francisco. "This is the most expensive city in the country," says Ken Jacobs, co-director of the San Francisco Living Wage Coalition, the group that led the campaign. "Wages are too low—people working full time are living in homeless shelters.

This will provide a tremendous difference. Is it enough? No. Is it a big step forward? No question."

The ordinance would cover workers at the San Francisco International Airport and people working for city contractors who have at least 20 employees or a contract of at least \$25,000. Pay will increase from \$6 to \$7 per hour to \$9 to \$10, Jacobs says. After the first two years, wages would increase 2.5 percent annually for three years. The board will vote on the ordinance August 14, and it could be in place as early as September.

A second proposal, the Health Care Accountability

Ordinance, would provide low-wage workers basic medical coverage. The insurance law would cover all city contracts and leases, including the restaurants at Fisherman's Wharf. The Board will vote on this in September.

The Living Wage Coalition estimates there are about 120,000 low-wage workers, or people earning less than \$11 per hour in San Francisco, which has a population of about 750,000. "San Francisco is facing a real crisis for working families," Jacobs says. "This is a real landmark."

Elizabeth Brennan

## Raceman Cometh

By Ben Winters

**T**he stereotypical advertising executive has evolved over the years, from gray flannel to counter-culture chic. But one thing hasn't changed: He's still white.

Not for long, however; not if crusader Lowell Thompson has his way.

In the early '90s, the mild-mannered Thompson—an African-American career ad man—ducked into the phone booth of his soul and emerged as Raceman, launching a one-man crusade against segregation in the advertising industry. In 1992, Thompson conducted a survey and discovered that of an estimated 6,500 creative personnel in the top agencies, only 60 were African-American; he published those numbers in *Print* magazine, and he's been trying to change them ever since. "I want 15 percent of the creative departments of the top 25 ad agencies to be African-Americans by the year 2005," Thompson says. "Blacks comprise between 12 to 14 percent of the population at this point, and they should be much more fairly represented than they are."

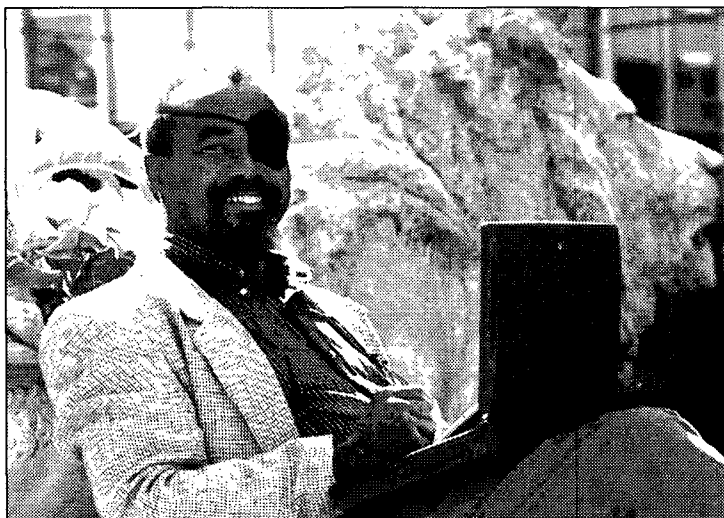
Thompson hasn't targeted the industry because of its hold on our hearts and minds, nor because he finds it represents blacks poorly. Indeed, Thompson figures that "blacks are probably portrayed better in ads now than they ever have been."

His ultimate goal is eradicating racist hiring practices entirely, and it's just a matter of starting his fight on the turf he knows best. "I'm using advertising because that's the area I understand," Thompson explains. "If [racism] exists in this area, and I know it does, then it probably exists in all areas of American business. I'm going to deal with it in the area [where] I have expertise."

After a series of magazine articles that he claims got him blacklisted from most agencies, Raceman began his latest campaign: creating parodies of

prominent ad campaigns, like his McDonald's spoof, in which he replaces the company's famous tag line with "Did Somebody Say Whites Only?" Without the resources to place his ads directly, Raceman pursues alternate routes of publicity, what he calls the "amazon.com strategy." "I want to create enough buzz that I don't have to pay for advertising," Thompson says.

He sends the pieces directly to their subjects (the "whites only" spot, for example, was Fed-Exed to McDonald's President Jack Greenberg, who dished it off to a "diversity coordinator"), to



Lowell Thompson, a.k.a. Raceman

the national media, to civil rights groups and congressmen. Thompson figures he'll get coverage because "what I'm doing is so highly unusual that it's a natural story."

Thompson hasn't always had such an antagonistic relationship with his industry. Starting out, he says, "I was never conscious that [racism] was a problem. I always liked the business, it was big fun. I was a happy young capitalist tool."

Growing up in the '50s on Chicago's South Side with 10 brothers and sisters, young Thompson never imagined he'd end up on Michigan Avenue; even when a 1965 poster design contest won him a scholarship to the School of the Art Institute, he only lasted six months.

After an office boy stint at the *Chicago Tribune*, Thompson began in 1968 at top ad agency Foote, Cone & Belding, part of a brief boom in African-American hiring that accompanied the burgeoning civil rights movement. Thus began a career that took him through several of the major advertising outfits and eventually to a vice presidency at Burrell—Chicago's first black-owned agency—before he started freelancing in 1980.

Toward the end of the '80s, Thompson noticed a shift in the business. "The agencies seemed to have gone backward in terms of the number of black people working," he says. "Since there were black agencies, white agencies felt like, 'Hey, we don't need to hire any blacks, we can send them over to Burrell.' It limited the amount of work available."

As Thompson sees it, this "ad agency apartheid" reflects a new and insidious form of segregation: "The whole idea of the new racism or post-racism is somebody who thinks that because of the civil rights movement, there is no racism and no need for them to do anything because they've got two blacks working in their department."

At [www.raceman.com](http://www.raceman.com), his online headquarters, Thompson announces his lofty goals: to expose and combat this "new racism" in our culture and to promote frank discussion of racial issues. "The bigger goal is to change America's ideas about race using communication techniques that I learned in advertising," Thompson explains. "This format of visuals, headlines and body copy is probably the most succinct, powerful way of communicating information."

Hence the parody ads, which he recently began posting on the Raceman site. So far the industry has remained predictably resistant to this message, but Raceman knows he has a long fight ahead. "It's taken America 400 years to create this problem," Raceman announces on his Web site. "I won't solve it overnight." ■

HOWARD D. SIMMONS





# Invasion of Privacy

**T**he congressional debate over health care and privacy has dragged on for five years now, but neither Republicans nor Democrats have addressed the main threat to patient privacy: the HMO habit of commandeering medical records. Democrats argue with Republicans about whether state privacy laws should be superseded by federal law, and whether doctors and HMOs should have to notify patients about their privacy policies. But neither party is posing the most fundamental question: Should HMO employees be allowed to read medical records in the first place?

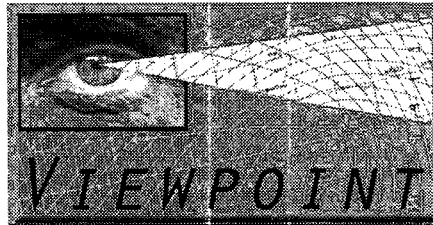
The reason for the deafening silence on this issue is obvious: Challenging the HMO practice of pawing through patient files is tantamount to challenging the entire concept of an HMO. Unlike traditional insurance companies, HMOs attempt to save money by influencing and vetoing physician-patient decisions. HMOs, in short, practice medicine. To practice medicine, one must have access to patient files. Putting an end to the HMO practice of seizing patient files without patient consent would almost certainly put an end to HMOs. And no one in Washington has the good sense or the courage to do that.

The current congressional debate about medical privacy began with the enactment of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act in 1996. That law authorized the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to regulate patient privacy if Congress did not act by August 21, 1999. Although several bills were introduced, Congress failed to act by the deadline, and so President Clinton proposed new regs in October 1999. The announcement provoked 53,000 public comments to DHHS between November and the close of the comment period last February. Revised regulations may be announced later this summer.

Clinton's privacy regulations would affirm the legality of the HMO practice of perusing patient files without patient consent. As George Annas, chairman of the health law department at Boston University School of Public Health, puts

it, under the lawless status quo, "everyone can see your medical record but you," and under Clinton's regs, "everyone can see your record including you."

Both Clinton's regs and Republican legislation, introduced in 1999, would prohibit the disclosure of medical records



to people who want the records for marketing purposes or to make employee hiring or promotion decisions. They would also give patients the right to inspect their own records and find out who is rifling through them. But these are tiny benefits compared to what the Republicans and Clinton give away. Both Clinton and the Republicans, using nearly identical language, authorize the seizure of patient files for the purpose of "health care operations," which they define with a long list of vague HMO-invented

euphemisms such as "conducting quality assessment and improvement activities," "utilization review," "medical review," "evaluating health plan performance," "coordinating health care," and, my favorite, "management functions of a health care provider or health plan."

These euphemisms were concocted by HMO advocates to convince the public that HMO interventions in the doctor-patient relationship are really in the patient's best interest. Thus, telling a doctor to get a patient out of the hospital is called "utilization review," and measuring the average length of hospital stays for the patients of a particular doctor is called "quality assessment." In fact, HMOs devote very little of their resources to improving care. Instead they spend their money monitoring and arguing with doctors, which is why they need patient files.

Polls indicate a huge majority of Americans think patient consent should always be sought by third parties seeking access to patient records. Polls also indicate that a majority of Americans believe HMO cost-control tactics have damaged the quality of care. Yet Clinton and Congress are on the verge of sanctioning the destruction of patient privacy in the name of facilitating cost-control methods.

This remarkable bipartisan indifference to public opinion might be less offensive if our elite could at least point to some solid evidence that the spread of HMOs has reduced costs or enhanced quality of care. But the evidence is that HMOs have not reduced health care inflation, and they have damaged quality of care—especially for the elderly and the chronically ill.

The American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association have publicly objected to the Clinton proposal on the grounds that it destroys patient privacy. But as powerful as these physician groups are, they have so far had little influence on the

**Keeping HMOs from pawing though patient files challenges the entire concept of an HMO.**

Washington debate. Clinton and the Democratic and Republican leadership persist in debating secondary issues, such as how much it will cost HMOs to tell patients who is reading their records.

Clinton and many members of Congress support the takeover of the U.S. health care system by HMOs. HMOs were the centerpiece of Clinton's doomed Health Security Act, and they are also the centerpiece of Republican plans to "reform" Medicare. Unless some brave members of Congress step forward and force a debate about whether America should continue to tolerate an HMO-run system, odds are good our out-of-touch president and Congress will sanctify the destruction of patient privacy. ■

*Kip Sullivan sits on the steering committee of the Health Care Campaign of Minnesota.*

# Why I'm Voting for Ralph ...

By Robert W. McChesney

Over the past few months, no one has aroused progressive political interest more than Ralph Nader, who suddenly has invigorated the most tedious and numbing presidential race imaginable. Suddenly, too, many of the crucial issues progressives care about—issues where Al Gore and George W. Bush either agree or differ only on nuance—have a candidate advancing them. And in Ralph Nader these positions are advocated by one of the most respected Americans of the past 50 years, a person whose integrity, competence, knowledge of the issues and commitment to social justice are unimpeachable.

But many progressives are lukewarm about Nader's candidacy, and some are downright hostile. There are a variety of reasons for this, but the most important one, by far, is the notion that Nader will steal votes from Gore, the lesser of the two mainstream evils. Hence, the more successful Nader is, the more likely it is that Bush will win, with the distinct possibility that the Republicans will control the White House and both branches of Congress for the first time since 1954. Although Bush and Gore eat from the same corporate trough on most issues, a Republican trifecta would be a nightmare for progressives. It could roll back affirmative action, lead to an even more direct assault on labor, unleash corporate greed and appoint judges with an open hostility to women's rights, choice and civil liberties. In short, the argument goes, George W. Bush combined with a Republican Congress would make the past eight years look like the opening weeks of the Paris Commune.

This is a serious argument, even if it tends to be overblown. And Bush is a singularly dreadful politician; he is corrupt, arrogant, cowardly and stupid. His administration will be all about explicitly serving the needs of corporate America to the exclusion of everyone else. But for progressives to vote for Al Gore would be a huge mistake nonetheless.

I am not opposed to the "lesser of two evils" argument per se. Were Nader not in the race, or were he running a faux campaign as in 1996, it would be more compelling. But Nader's Green Party effort is not a fringe or short-term campaign. It is the best chance we have to break out of the cul-de-sac of "lesser of two evil politics" at least since Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition in 1988, and possibly for generations.

Moreover, if we are going to go the "lesser of two evils" route, it would sure help if the lesser part of the equation

wasn't as lame as Gore. Former Labor Secretary Robert Reich speaks the truth when he praises Gore as being superior to George W. Bush as a president for Wall Street and corporate America. As Reich recently gloated in the *Financial Times*, Gore is the "ideal candidate for American business, with a record to show it." In a nation where the core problems stem from excessive corporate power, a lack of democracy, and massive social inequality, Gore has been the standard-bearer of those who benefit from the status quo.

We need to recognize that the political times are changing. The sort of liberal-conservative mainstream analysis that still dominates journalism, punditry and academic writing is increasingly irrelevant to U.S. politics. The support for the traditional parties is weak; it is largely the electoral laws and donations from the wealthy that keep them in business, which they well understand. Specifically, the support for candidates Gore and Bush is paper thin. It is nearly impossible to engage in a heated

**Supporting Gore is out of place in a historical moment when millions of Americans are blatantly dissatisfied with the political status quo.**

argument with one of their supporters, because they do not generate that sort of support.

In short, there may be new openings for progressive candidates and arguments. Support for a candidate like Nader, for example, will come not only from traditional Democrats and independents, but also from people who might not vote otherwise. Some rank-and-file Republicans, believe it or not, also respond well to Nader's call for fair markets, clean elections and government, and against commercial values increasingly ruling all aspects of our lives.

Assume for a moment that Nader withdrew from the race so as not to hand the election to Bush. Say Gore were to win: Then in four or eight years we will be faced with his lame VP as the candidate and another "lesser of two evils" debate. If Gore loses, on the other hand, the conventional wisdom will be that he couldn't appeal to the "center," that he wasn't Republican enough. Then in four years, after all the big money weighs in, we'll end up with another candidate like Gore and another "lesser of two evils" plot line. As the percentage of citizens who vote continues to drop, those who do vote increasingly come from the contented classes. So pitching a campaign to the interests of the bulk of the population is ever more counterproductive, especially to the wealthy who bankroll the electoral campaigns.

The idiocy of this situation should be apparent. Like Clinton, Gore can only win elections with the support of organized labor, minorities, feminists, environmentalists and those poor and working-class people who do vote. So when Democratic presidential candidates fall behind in their races, they invariably pile on slops from the rhetorical larder attacking corporations and the rich. The desperate Gore is already in full throttle. Yet when there is an important conflict between big money and these core constituencies, Gore and Clinton put their support on the corporate side of the ledger. The recent vote on trade with China is a classic example, though



there have been scores of similar episodes over the past eight years. Gore and Clinton know their progressive constituencies will never turn to the Republicans, so in the end, they will get their support.

Reich makes this clear in his *Financial Times* piece: Business can disregard any Democratic populist campaign rhetoric, he notes, because "once in office, Democratic presidents tend to shift to the right without risk of losing their Democratic base because it has no one else to turn to." So pathetic is the left today, that the Gore crowd is blatant in its contempt for their concerns. Yet the "lesser of two evils" crowd says we have no choice but to back Gore. If we are willing to back Gore in this context, it is clear that we will back any Democrat in any context. So there is no reason to think those who bankroll and run the party should have any reason to fear or respect us. And they don't.

Some of those progressives who respect Nader but criticize him for taking votes from Gore argue that Nader should have run as a Democrat. Then he could make his case in the primaries and not worry about helping the Republicans win the general election. It is clearly too late for that route in 2000, so the insinuation is that we should attempt to nominate a progressive Democrat in future years, after we make sure Gore defeats Bush. But it is worth asking if that route really is plausible at all. Let's face it: The last time a progressive outsider took the Democratic nomination was 28 years ago, and much has changed in the world since then. There are crucial factors that seem to undermine the ability of progressives to mount a successful internal Democratic grassroots challenge à la McGovern.

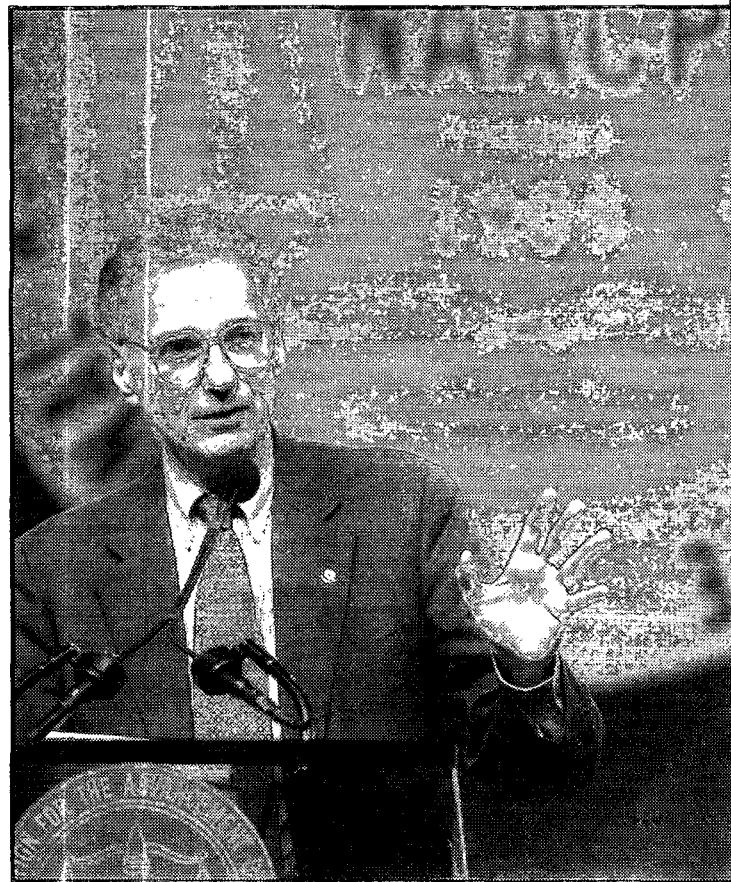
These include: the necessity for obscenely massive campaign war chests; the tight noose of the corporate news media with their pathetic range of legitimate debate; and the requirement of progressives to show their party loyalty by agreeing to support the considerable deadweight in the party. Is there any reason to think these factors will lessen in 2004, 2008 or beyond? A large

**If Gore loses due to a strong Nader showing, the Democrats will realize that they cannot take progressives for granted.**

percentage of the nominally Democratic voting base may well support progressive positions on many issues—and oppose the pro-corporate agenda of Clinton and Gore—but the system works to see that support does not translate into a progressive Democratic Party.

I am agnostic on the question of whether, ultimately, the Democrats or the Greens or some other party will advance progressive politics in the electoral arena. I do know we need a popular front or coalition to advocate basic democratic and progressive values, and that much

of this coalition must come from elements of the Democratic Party. But I would argue that even those who think the Democratic Party is the only possible place for a progressive challenge to corporate rule should support the Nader campaign. If Gore loses due to a strong Nader showing, the Democrats will finally have to realize they cannot take labor, feminists, environmentalists and other progressives for granted. The



MICHAEL SMITH/NEWSMAKERS

post-mortems for Gore will not say he was not Republican enough, but that he wasn't progressive enough. And that can only be for the good. A strong Nader campaign this fall also will certainly help the numerous progressive Democrats in tight races across the nation. And in generating a broad base of support, Nader and the Greens will have jump-started the hard work of asserting progressive values in the Democratic Party. It might lay the foundation for a progressive Democrat to succeed in the primary process in the coming years.

My point is simply that the only way to jolt life into this system is from the outside. This is why the Nader campaign is so impressive and so important. Nader and Winona LaDuke, the Green vice presidential candidate, are thinking long-term, toward building a progressive electoral majority in the next 10 to 20 years. The issues they campaign on are the issues we are organizing around all the time—so even if they lose, the campaign can still have a constructive role. Their campaign is not based on a bunch of "fringe" positions that the bulk of Americans detest—despite the efforts of those that oppose progressive politics to so characterize them. On the contrary, Nader and LaDuke speak with authority in plain language

about power and fairness and justice and democracy in a manner that has broad appeal.

In view of the imbalance in media coverage and money, the support for Nader is astonishing. At the present rate, polls show him possibly getting 3 to 12 percent of the vote in November. If there is justice, and he gets a place in the presidential debates, his support almost certainly would climb dramatically—which is why Gore and his cronies are desperate to keep Nader off the ballot, out of the debates, and discredited by the mainstream media. If voters began to actually think that Nader could win the election, all bets would be off about how well he would do.

I understand why so many progressives I respect are apprehensive about the Nader campaign. There is the distinct possibility that a successful Nader campaign will lead to a Bush victory, with all that entails. There is also the chance that the Nader campaign will be a total dud, but that the energy which goes into it instead of the Gore campaign will contribute to a Bush victory as well. And, in certain areas, a Bush administration will be markedly worse than a Gore administration.

But I think the risk is worth taking. Gore is so bad on so many issues that the difference between him and Bush may well be less than that of any two mainstream candidates in memory, and that is saying a lot. The payoff for supporting Gore, on balance, is low and strictly short-term. It is out of place in a historical moment when millions of Americans are blatantly dissatisfied with the political status quo and grasping for new ideas.

We have to think in broader terms than the immediate election. The Nader campaign is a necessary step in building a progressive political movement in this nation. There is no better time than now, and no better standard-bearer on the horizon than Nader. It will take time; we not only have to attract current voters, but we have to get the millions and millions of disaffected voters to come to the polls because they will finally see politics as addressing issues that mean something to their lives and their communities.

There are grounds for optimism. There may be more political vibrancy today—around issues like corporate-run globalization, the death penalty, sweatshop labor, the environment—than at any time since the '70s. The Nader campaign is part of this progressive resurgence. Indeed, if we try to stoke progressive non-electoral movements on the one hand while adhering to a lesser-of-two-evils support for Gore on the other hand, the resulting confusion can be disastrous for any nascent left. It makes progressives look like a bunch of political nincompoops.

All told, a strong Nader showing in 2000 can be a platform for rejuvenating progressive politics in the United States for the coming generation. It is a risk that must be taken. ■

**Robert W. McChesney** is author of *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (New Press) and (with John Nichols) *It's the Media, Stupid* (Seven Stories).

# ... And Why I'm Not

By James Weinstein

In 1948, when I cast my first vote for president, Henry A. Wallace, vice president during FDR's second and third terms, was running as the Progressive Party candidate against Republican Thomas Dewey and Democrat Harry S. Truman. In August, he was at 12 percent in the polls. On election day, he got 2 percent. My history professor at Cornell, a wonderful man named Paul Wallace Gates, was the New York state treasurer of the Wallace for President Committee. On election day, he voted for Truman. Within a year the Progressive Party disintegrated.

In 1980, Barry Commoner ran as the Citizens Party candidate for president against Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter. Progressives worked hard and got him on the ballot in 29 states. He got only 220,000 votes and the Citizens Party quickly disappeared.

Now it's Ralph Nader's turn, and his supporters repeat the identical arguments and exhibit the same enthusiasm for Nader that I did for Wallace and others did for Commoner. Sadly, there is no reason to expect that the results will not be the same.

**Nader is acting purely as an inspired individual. He is a talking head without a political body.**

Bob McChesney says that we have to think in broader terms than the immediate election, a statement with which I fervently agree. But he sees the Nader campaign as a necessary step in building a progressive political movement that will amount to more than a hill of beans. There, I believe, he is dead wrong.

First, serious politics requires participation in elections on all levels of government and at all times. Organized popular constituencies don't come from the single-issue movements that McChesney sees as Nader's base. These single-issue movements focus narrowly on their issues and operate by putting pressure on legislators to support or oppose specific legislation or policies. Broad electoral constituencies, on the other hand, must be created by common popular action around a program that embodies shared universal principles. The Nader campaign did not arise from such a movement, nor is it organized in a way that will produce one. It has sprung forth out of nowhere. It represents no identifiable constituency. Like others on the left, Nader and his disparate supporters are simply following a well-established pattern. Every four or eight years, some of us look around and are so appalled by the major party choices that we



are compelled to tilt at windmills by engaging in quixotic campaigns for president.

This campaign follows that pattern. It started at the top and it will end at the top. In part, it will because Nader is acting purely as an inspired individual. He is a talking head without a political body. True, he is using the Green Party in some states as a framework for his campaign, but without him there would be no campaign because neither he nor they represent a movement experienced in building broad electoral constituencies.

Second, few people outside the circle of true believers, and a couple of union leaders who appear to be using Nader as leverage to get favors from Clinton or Gore, will ever see him or hear his message. In 1980, after spending most of their money on efforts to get on the ballot, the Citizens Party could afford only one national radio broadcast during the campaign. In it, Commoner said something about Reagan and Carter's "bullshit." The next day, the *New York Times* reported, "Presidential candidate says 'bullshit.'" On election day that was all the general public had heard or knew about Commoner and his party. Today, Nader is getting more media coverage, but it is horse-race reporting; his ideas remain as invisible to the general public as Commoner's.

Jesse Jackson, on the other hand, did what McChesney denigrates: He ran in the Democratic primaries in 1988. As a result, he participated in the televised debates, outshone his rivals and made the most enthusiastically received speech at the Democratic National Convention. His ideas received wide public exposure. And thus he greatly increased the political visibility of the African-American community, as well as his own clout within national politics. He created a potential for a sustained left movement, though unfortunately he did not pursue that goal.

McChesney also argues that the difficulties posed by a grassroots challenge within the Democratic Party are too great to overcome; he says the requirement for "obscene-ly massive campaign war chests," and the "tight noose of

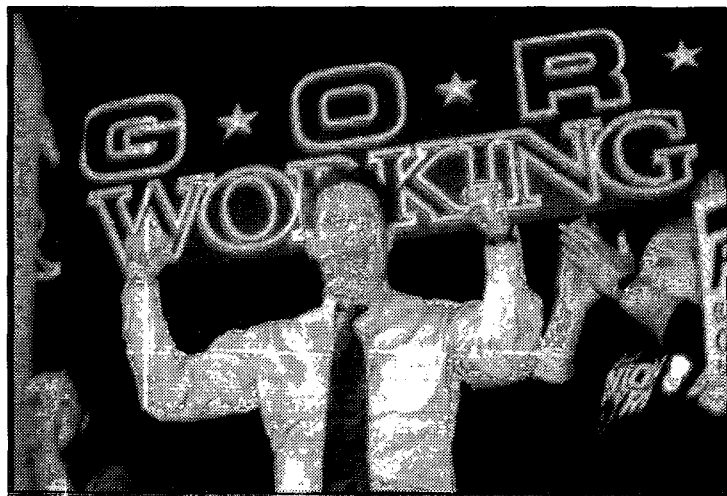
**Every four or eight years, some of us are so appalled by the major party choices that we are compelled to tilt at windmills by engaging in quixotic campaigns for president.**

the corporate news media with their pathetic range of legitimate debate" make progressive participation within that framework impractical. But the same difficulties are infinitely greater for those operating as a third party. In fact, Jackson got considerable media attention precisely because he was in the primaries. He was able to put forward his ideas in nationally televised debates at no cost to his campaign. He needed only a small fraction of the money Nader will have to raise if he hopes to receive half as much media attention as Jackson did.

Instead of looking at this realistically, McChesney resorts to wishful thinking about Nader being given a place in the nationally televised debates. "If there is justice," he writes, "and [Nader] gets a place in the presidential debates, his support almost certainly would climb dramatically." Duh! Of course, that's why Jackson ran in the Democratic primaries.

Third, McChesney suggests that by speaking with authority in plain language about power, fairness, justice and democracy, Nader can unify the masses in opposition to the two corporate candidates. But the issue here is not the value of Nader's ideas and principles. Rather it is two-fold: first, whether these ideas will be heard and examined, and, second, given the potential for taking votes away from Gore, what effect this would have on the left's natural constituencies.

In a recent article urging people to vote for Nader in *Conscious Choice*, an ecology magazine, Dan Hamburg



JOEFF DAVIS

explains the dilemma that many sympathetic to Nader's ideas will face. In states where the Democrat or Republican is way ahead in the polls, people should vote for Nader, he says; while in states where Bush and Gore are neck-and-neck, those not wanting to elect Bush should vote for Gore. But following this advice would negatively affect Nader's vote, especially in the states where he now is polling best. The result, among other things, would be to understate the degree of popular agreement with Nader's ideas and thereby further marginalize him and the left.

McChesney clearly rejects Hamburg's approach, but his path might mean that a vote for Nader would win a state, and possibly the presidency, for Bush. This appears to be the case in Michigan, for example, where Nader is presently polling 8 percent—enough to throw the state to Bush as things now stand.

Well, Naderites would say, what's wrong with that? And the answer is that besides electing Bush, there would also be hell to pay with the very social base—labor and African-Americans—that is most favorably disposed to Nader's ideas, and is the left's natural constituency. The problem is that these are the people most loyal to the Democratic Party. Gore will get 90 percent of the black vote, and 60 to 65 percent of labor's vote. Both constituencies have practical reasons for wanting a Democratic president. To them, Nader is OK, but

only as long as he is not a spoiler. Hamburg indicates that the same is true among environmentalists.

In short, the issue here is not whether we need a second force in American politics—one that would represent the interests of the overwhelming majority of men and women who work for a living. There's no dispute on this. But for us to realize this goal, we have to understand the structural nature of our political system and how to use it. Otherwise, we will remain little more than gadflies.

Consider this: No significant third party in American history, with the exception of the old Socialist Party, ever

ran more than two consecutive presidential campaigns. And, again except for the Socialists, the second campaign of the third parties has always been much weaker than the first. The Socialists ran five campaigns between 1900 and 1920 and remained an important voice in American life until their breakup three years after the Russian Revolution. But even at the height of their influence they had no potential of becoming a major presence in Congress, much less of electing a president.

The reason for this is that we do not have a system in which the members of an elected parliament select the prime minister as head of government; nor do we have a system of proportional representation for electing legislators. In countries with either

of those systems, minority parties often have a chance to participate meaningfully in the legislature, and even, in coalitions, choosing the prime minister.

But in a system like ours, where the president is elected directly and Congress is elected in single-member majority districts, the system moves inexorably toward two parties. Only in periods when one of the major parties is fatally wounded over an issue of vital national concern—as was the case with the Whigs and the extension of slavery in the 1850s—has it been possible for a third party to enter the scene and grow rapidly. That, of course, is how Lincoln won on his party's second try.

But all is not lost. When Harold Washington was mayor of Chicago, he used to talk about the city's two parties. He didn't mean the Democrats and the Republicans; he meant his party and little Richie Daley's. Like both major parties throughout the country, the official party was open by law to anyone who registered in it. Indeed, anyone can enter a primary for legislative or executive office. And any group can promote its own candidates and thereby become a force in national politics, as the Christian right did in the Republican Party in the '80s. Furthermore, because only a small fraction of the electorate votes in primaries, a well-organized force can win nominations much more easily in primaries than in general elections.

Rather than panicking every four years, getting all wound up in an essentially hopeless campaign, and then, when the results are disappointing, lapsing into disillusionment and inertia, the left should begin thinking seriously about how to intervene successfully in our political system. It's time for us to confront reality and to grow up politically. ■

# newLabor Forum

## Intellectual Ammunition for Labor's Revival



A fair and just society is impossible without a strong labor movement. New Labor Forum features spirited debate by leading labor activists and intellectuals about the issues critical to the future of unions in America:

- organizing in the global economy
- the crisis in public education
- the politics of race and gender
- labor's role in ownership and management
- independent political action
- union democracy, and more...

**Join the debate,  
subscribe today!**

One Year  
(2 issues) \$20

Two Years  
(4 issues) \$30

Institutional  
One Year  
(2 issues) \$50

Institutional  
Two Years  
(4 issues) \$80

SEND PAYMENT TO:

New Labor Forum  
25 West 43rd Street  
19th Floor  
New York NY 10036

or call  
212-827-0200  
or fax  
212-827-5955



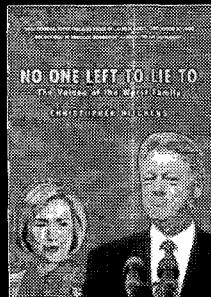
# Hot.



## MAGICAL URBANISM Latinos Reinvent the US City MIKE DAVIS

Davis explores the great drama of how Latinos are turning their demographic ascendancy into effective social power throughout urban America.

Cloth 1 85984 771 4 \$19/128 pages



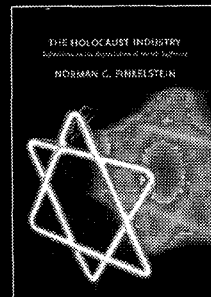
## NO ONE LEFT TO LIE TO The Values of the Worst Family CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

(An expanded paperback of the New York Times Bestseller)

If Christopher Hitchens is a Marxist, I want to be one, too.

*Florence King - National Review*  
Hitchens continues his slow motion citizen's cardiac arrest of the Clintons, here turning his caustic gaze towards Hillary's Senatorial campaign.

Paper 1 85984 284 4 \$10/128 pages



## THE HOLOCAUST INDUSTRY Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering NORMAN FINKELSTEIN

*Explosive - The Sunday Times (London)*

In a controversial new book, Finkelstein contends that the major threat to the memory of Nazism's victims comes not from the distortions of Holocaust deniers but from self-proclaimed guardians of Holocaust memory.

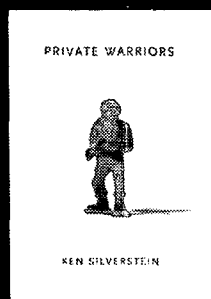
Cloth 1 85984 773 0 \$23/160 pages



## IN THE SHADOW OF THE LIBERATOR Hugo Chávez and the Transformation of Venezuela RICHARD GOTT

In first-hand reporting from Venezuela, Gott places the Comandante in an historical perspective, and examines his plans and programs.

Cloth 1 85984 775 7 \$23/160 pages



## PRIVATE WARRIORS KEN SILVERSTEIN

Silverstein reveals that today's private warriors have a financial interest in war, as well as the connections to push for a continuation of Cold War military policy.

Cloth 1 85984 756 0 \$25/224 pages



## WITHOUT GUARANTEES In Honor of Stuart Hall PAUL GILROY, LAWRENCE GROSSBERG, ANGELA McROBBIE (Eds.)

Judith Butler, Kobena Mercer, Gayatri Spivak, and other luminaries honor the groundbreaking cultural criticism of Stuart Hall.

Paper 1 85984 287 9 \$22/416 pages



VERSO

Would you like to receive news about Verso on a monthly email? If so, please send a blank email to [versonews@versobooks.com](mailto:versonews@versobooks.com).

Verso Books / 180 Varick Street, New York City 10014 / 212 807-9680 / [www.versobooks.com](http://www.versobooks.com)

distributed by W.W. Norton & Company / 500 Fifth Avenue New York City 10110 / 800 233-4830

# What's in Your Green Tea?

By Frances Cerra Whittelsey

**H**ope Nemiroff thought she was living the healthiest lifestyle possible. After being diagnosed with cancer in 1995 and having a tiny tumor removed from her breast, she had changed her ways. She walked. She went for hypnosis and did yoga to help reduce her stress levels. She switched to a mostly organic, vegetable-based diet. She drank a dozen cups of green tea every day.

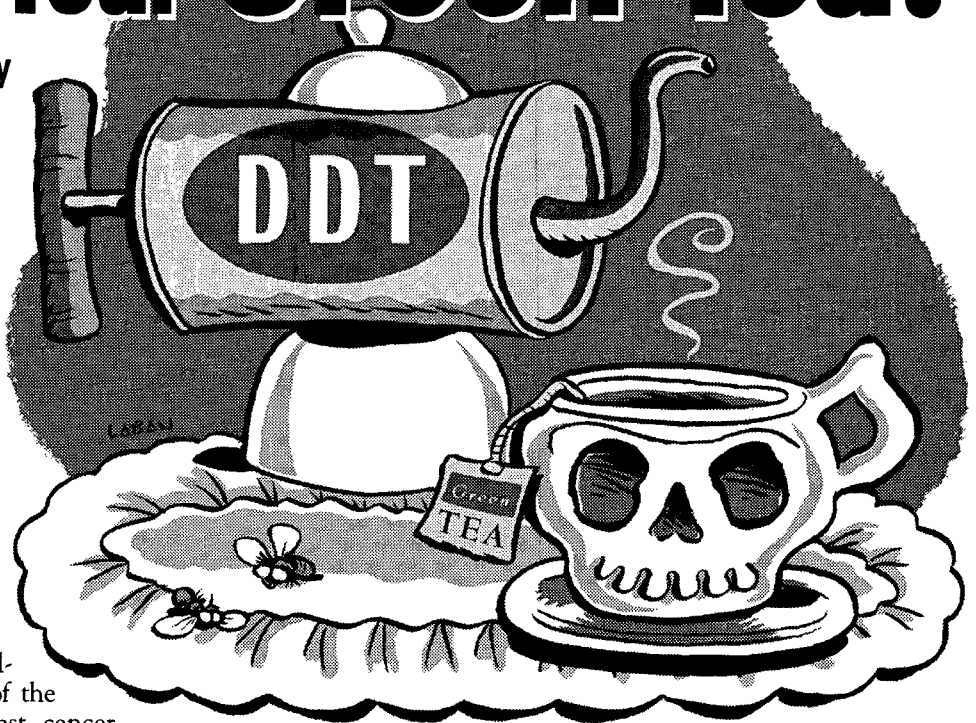
Determined to learn everything she could about her disease, Nemiroff, now 58, also became president of the Mid-Hudson Breast Health Action Project, an advocacy group in New York. Impressed by her efforts, her oncologist hired her to help with a study of the relationship between DDT and breast cancer.

Although she was not a subject of the study, Nemiroff says, "I got curious. I wanted to see what [the blood] of somebody like me would look like who was living a healthy lifestyle."

Her blood, it turned out, contained traces of DDT. And when she later investigated what part of her diet might be contaminated with the pesticide, the answer jolted her. A laboratory analysis found DDT in her green tea.

This finding was especially shocking because green tea has become the unofficial beverage of choice for breast cancer survivors. Both laboratory science and low breast cancer rates in Japan, a land of green-tea drinkers, suggest that substances in the tea might play a role in preventing breast cancer. Tea manufacturers have capitalized on those theories, labeling their boxes with statements like "Ancient Healing Formula Teas with Organic Ingredients" (The Yogi Tea Company) or noting the presence of anti-oxidants that "help neutralize free radicals ... molecules which can damage cells" (Lipton). While overall tea sales in the United States have remained flat during the past decade, cancer concern has propelled the wholesale value of green tea consumed here from \$2 million in 1990 to \$25 million in 1999.

DDT, on the other hand, is a synonym for environmental poison. It is the pesticide that was banned by the United States in 1972, 10 years after publication of Rachel Carson's landmark book, *Silent Spring*. Carson exposed the pesticide as a terminator, a man-made plague that wiped out populations of songbirds, trout and salmon, killing them outright or rendering them sterile. Introduced to the world during World War II as a public health measure to kill body lice and mosquitoes, DDT was sprayed with abandon for decades by government agencies and a trusting public who never suspected it would remain in the environment long afterward.



Many now believe that exposure to DDT is a cause of cancer. Carson herself endured a radical mastectomy while writing *Silent Spring*, and she died of breast cancer two years after the book was published.

Finding DDT in Nemiroff's tea raises a number of urgent questions: Was the finding an isolated case? How did it get there? Did the DDT threaten Nemiroff's health, that of other breast cancer survivors, or other American consumers? Should people stop drinking green tea?

**A**n *In These Times* investigation has found that Nemiroff's contaminated tea was clearly not an isolated or rare case. *In These Times* purchased 10 boxes of different brands of green tea at a suburban New York supermarket and health food store, and had them analyzed by Toxicology International of Fairfax, Virginia. Analysis of the tea samples showed that two of the 10 brands were contaminated with DDT, in violation of Environmental Protection Agency rules. The one with the highest levels was produced by the Yogi Tea Company, and included the herbs echinacea and kombucha. However, a new sample of Alvita Chinese Green Tea, the brand Nemiroff had been drinking, showed no traces of DDT.

In addition, five of the tea samples contained chlorpyrifos, also known as Dursban, which the EPA banned from consumer products last June because of its health risk, particularly to children. Chlorpyrifos is an organophosphate, but is closely related to DDT. Under its recent action, the EPA reduced the allowable residues of chlorpyrifos in many fruits and vegetables. But tea is not supposed to contain any of the pesticide, making any amount of it an illegal adulteration.

These test results mean that consumers can have no assur-



ance that green tea—or any tea made from leaves of the *camellia sinensis* plant—is free of pesticide contamination. But the importance of the findings, say experts informed of the test results, is that they show the widespread contamination of our food supply and the environment.

The pesticides were found in tiny amounts, in parts per billion, and pose no imminent health danger. DDT accumulates in our bodies and is carried in breast tissue, so ingesting contaminated tea is certainly undesirable. But the experts say that the benefits of drinking green tea probably outweigh the risks.

**H**ow did the DDT get in the tea? Surprise: DDT is still being manufactured in China and India and used in more than two dozen Third World countries in Africa and Asia. China is the source of most of the green tea imported into the United States. Finding DDT in tea imported from China would not surprise Janice Jensen, a senior environmental chemist in the EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs. "They're still producing DDT in China," she says, "and there is still some use of DDT there. DDT is caught in the atmosphere, and can be redeposited far from its use site—that's one of the arguments for the global treaty on persistent organic pollutants."

This proposed international treaty is the focus of intensive efforts by the United Nations and environmental organizations, and it is still being negotiated. (The United States government says it supports the treaty, but environmentalists have criticized U.S. efforts to water down provisions that they and the European Union support.) The overall goal is to reduce the use of, or eliminate entirely, 12 particularly hazardous chemicals called "persistent organic pollutants," or POPs, including DDT. But several developing countries are balking at a DDT ban because until effective and affordable alternatives are available it is their best weapon against mosquitoes that transmit malaria, one of the world's top public health problems. Although environmentalists urge the use of safer alternatives, DDT is cheap and readily available. The affected countries simply cannot afford other control methods, and the United States has not made combating malaria a top spending priority (see "Malaria Kills," page 19).

But it turns out that the actions of people in China and Africa, taken to protect their health from an immediate and deadly threat, have a direct impact on the purity of the American food supply. According to Clifton Curtis, director of the World Wildlife Fund's Global Toxics Initiative, "DDT is such a potent chemical that as long as it is used anywhere in the world, nobody is safe."

Six billion pounds of DDT have been produced and used since its introduction in 1942, more than any other pesticide. In years past, it was sprayed, often in a sticky oil mixture, on farmlands, forests, rivers, estuaries and even the

Long Island suburbs of New York City (which today have very high rates of breast cancer). The purpose of that suburban spraying effort was to wipe out the gypsy moth, and it was a failure; the insects periodically re-appear in the Northeast in numbers so large that you can hear them eating the oak trees bare.

Because DDT persists in the environment for decades, it is literally everywhere and in everybody. The average level of the pesticide in human fat is seven parts per million. DDT and its metabolite, DDE, have been found in every sample of breast milk tested, from the Arctic to South Africa—where children receive DDT in their mothers' milk at rates five to 18 times higher than recommended by the World Health Organization. The fact that the WHO even has calculated an "acceptable" daily intake of DDT testifies to the extent of DDT pollution.

In the United States, a 1992-1993 study by the Food and Drug Administration found that 5.6 percent of commonly consumed fruits and vegetables that it tested were contaminated with illegal pesticides. Todd Hettenbach, a pesticide policy analyst with the Environmental Working Group, says that even crops grown in the United States, where DDT use stopped almost 30 years ago, continue to show DDT contamination. Squash and root crops like carrots are a particular concern, he says.

With imported food, the situation is worse. A 1994 report to Congress on food safety by the General Accounting Office (GAO) noted that countries which export food to the United States need not, except in the case of meat and poultry, have monitoring systems equivalent to ours, and that U.S. agencies often lack information on chemicals used by exporting countries.

Richard Liroff, director of the World Wildlife Fund's Alternatives to DDT Project, says his organization had queried the Chinese government to find out how much

DDT is both produced and used there. "We got no response," he says, adding, "Even though it is widely believed that there is diversion [of DDT intended for public health purposes] to agriculture, we have nothing more than anecdotal evidence."

**T**echnically, EPA rules make the presence of any DDT in food illegal. But recognizing the reality of worldwide contamination, the agency has set "action" levels for the presence of DDT in meat, fruits and vegetables. These levels are in parts per million, amounts far higher than those found in the tea. Only when the action levels are exceeded do either the U.S. Department of Agriculture or FDA take steps to find the source of the DDT and try to retrieve the food before it gets to market.

In 1994 the GAO reported that 3 percent of the imported food shipments tested by the FDA contained prohibited pesti-



Hope Nemiroff

ANDREA BARRIST STERN



# Tea Test Results

**T**he amounts are tiny, in the parts per billion, but analyses of 10 samples of dry, unbrewed, green tea bought at a suburban New York supermarket and health food store showed that two were contaminated with DDT; five contained chlorpyrifos, a pesticide recently banned by the EPA.

The largest amount of DDT, a total of 429.2 parts per billion (ppb) of two DDT metabolites (which are variations of DDT altered by chemical

processes in the environment) was found in The Yogi Tea Company's Green Tea with Triple Echinacea and Kombucha, a combination of tea and herbs. A far smaller amount of one DDT metabolite, 19.6 ppb, was found in Stash Premium Green Tea.



**Celestial Seasonings Organic Green Tea tested free of both DDT and chlorpyrifos.**

The five teas found to contain chlorpyrifos were: Celestial Seasonings Antioxidant Green Tea, 18.2 ppb; Stash, 7.5 ppb; Lipton Green Tea, 7 ppb; Twining's Green Tea, 5.7 ppb; and, Uncle Lee's Organic Green Tea, 1.3 parts per billion.

The brands that tested free of both substances were: Red Rose Decaffeinated 100% Green Tea; Salada Green Tea; Celestial Seasonings Organic Green Tea; and Alvita Chinese Green Tea, the brand that Hope Nemiroff had been drinking. The sample she had tested earlier contained 51.9 ppb of three DDT metabolites.

The tests used dry tea samples from two tea bags of each brand tested. The analyses also looked for a whole group of related pesticides, including aldrin, dieldrin, parathion, and malathion, and found no traces of these substances in any of the samples. ■

cides. It said that even when detected, about one-third of the contaminated food probably found its way to store shelves. "It is very hard to seize contaminated products once they leave the border, very hard to track them down," says Jay Feldman of the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides.

Devra Lee Davis, an epidemiologist and toxicologist who was a presidential appointee to a government chemical safety board, says that "having been in the government, I understand that this is too big a problem for the government to solve. It will take the private sector organizing itself to provide assurance to the public" that imported food is pesticide-free by testing their products. The Environmental Working Group has suggested that food importers adopt an approach to food safety that would establish critical control points for quality testing. The private sector would do the testing, and the FDA would police that process.

But tea manufacturers insist they do test. "This is the first time anyone has found anything in our tea," says Jagat Joti Khalsa, director of communications for Yogi Tea, upon learning the results of the tea analysis. He describes a systematic and elaborate process of constant testing of tea and herbs bought from 40 or 50 vendors, which he says costs the company more than 5 percent of its profit margin. Most of the company's green tea, he says, comes from organic tea estates, primarily in India.

The other tea contaminated with DDT was Stash Premium Green Tea. Joy Edlund, a spokeswoman for Stash, calls the finding "really strange." She says the company's premium green tea is grown in Brazil on virgin land never before used for agriculture, "so DDT was never used on it." She adds that the company's farming practices are so natural that it has been contemplating marketing the tea as organic. She says Stash does not test its tea for purity itself; they import the tea from Brazil.

Both Edlund and Khalsa asked for the tea used in the tests to be sent to them for their own analysis.

**A**mong many breast cancer activists and some scientists, there is a strong belief that past and present small-scale exposure to DDT is the cause of at least some breast, prostate and other kinds of cancer. But not all the evidence is clear. A 1993 study showed that women with malignant breast cancer had higher blood levels of DDT than women without the disease, but it has been difficult to really nail down cause and effect. A May 1994 toxicological profile of the chemical prepared for the U.S. Public Health Service noted that studies of workers exposed to DDT in the workplace "do not indicate conclusively an association" between DDT exposure and cancer.

Yet the same document notes that studies "suggest that DDT may cause damage to human chromosomes" and that studies in rats show it to have "estrogen-like" effects. This is of particular concern because one of the few generally accepted risk factors for breast cancer is exposure to estrogen or estrogen-mimicking substances, called xenoestrogens. Studies show that estrogen and xenoestrogens bind with receptors in mammary glands, and in the lab xenoestrogens have been shown to make human breast cancer cells grow. The longer a woman is exposed to estrogen—either naturally, through early menstruation or late menopause, or, it is theorized, from exposure to estrogen-mimickers—the higher her risk of breast cancer.

It is on the basis of its estrogenic properties that Janette Sherman, a physician and author of *Life's Delicate Balance: Causes and Prevention of Breast Cancer*, is convinced that DDT is a cause of that disease. "You [eat] one part per billion today," she says, "and one tomorrow, and at the end of the month you have 30 parts—these chemicals accumulate in the fat. DDT breaks down into DDE, which has been shown to be estrogenic in multiple animal tests going back to the '60s." She adds: "It's nice to call [the studies] equivocal, but it's not that way at all."

Because she knew about these studies, Hope Nemiroff decided to act after her blood test showed higher than average levels of DDT. She spent 22 days undergoing a detoxification regi-



men designed to purge chemical poisons from the body. The regimen included a run followed by more than four hours a day of sweating in a relatively low-temperature sauna. The regimen seemed to work. Her DDT blood levels fell from 0.9 parts per billion before the regimen to 0.3 parts per billion after.

But six months later—during which time she had been eating her organic diet and drinking green tea—she was rocked by the results of another blood test: Her DDT levels had risen to 1.1 parts per billion. When a test of her water found it clear, she had the tea tested and discovered that it was, indeed, contaminated.

Should people stop drinking green tea because of these findings? Green tea is no different from other teas in that it comes from the *camellia sinensis* plant, which grows best in the tropics at high altitude, where the days are warm, rain is ample, and the nights are cool. What makes the final product green tea, as opposed to black tea, is only the manner of processing. Black tea leaves are subjected to a period of high heat and humidity, during which the tea oxidizes and turns from green to brown. Leaves for green tea are subjected to a shorter or somewhat different heating process. As a result, green tea retains a class of chemicals called catechins, which may play a role in cancer prevention and be part of the explanation for lower breast cancer rates in Japan.

Davis, who has written extensively on breast cancer and the environment and expects to publish Nemiroff's case in a scientific journal, did not advise her to stop drinking green tea. Davis would not recommend other women give up the beverage either. "There is a lot of benefit to drinking green tea that has been shown experimentally," she says.

Sherman, author of books on breast cancer and chemical exposure, agrees that people should not stop drinking potentially beneficial green tea because of the DDT findings. What those results illustrate, she says, "is that our entire food supply is now contaminated worldwide because of massive use of pesticides."

As Nemiroff has done, consumers can try to avoid drinking pesticides in their tea by switching to brands certified as organic, although this is not an absolute guarantee of purity. Eating organically grown fruits and vegetables—which are more expensive than non-organic—can also help minimize pesticide exposure. Losing weight also releases pesticide residues stored in fat, eliminating them from the body.

But Nemiroff's story illustrates that it is virtually impossible to completely avoid food contaminated with pesticides even when someone goes out of her way to try. Pesticides, wrote Carson three decades ago, are "as crude a weapon as the cave man's club," a chemical barrage "hurled against the fabric of life."

"The contamination of our world," she continued, "is not alone a matter of mass spraying. Indeed, for most of us this is of less importance than the innumerable small-scale exposures to which we are subjected day by day, year after year. Like the constant dripping of water that in turn wears away the hardest stone, this birth-to-death contact with dangerous chemicals may in the end prove disastrous." ■



## Malaria Kills

There is one major reason why 30 countries in the world continue to use DDT: malaria.

Malaria kills 1 million people a year, 700,000 of them children, usually under 5. It also sickens 500 million people, most of them also children under 5. Most suffer without any treatment at all, because the inexpensive drug chloroquine, which offered good control of the disease for years, no longer works effectively and alternative drugs are very expensive.

In addition to the human misery it causes, malaria also intensifies poverty, holding back economic development in affected parts of Asia, Africa and South America. A recent study by the Harvard University Center for International Development and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine calculated that Africa's annual gross domestic product would be \$400 billion today instead of \$300 billion if malaria had been eliminated in 1965.

DDT remains the least expensive and in some cases the most readily available weapon against the mosquitoes that carry the plasmodium parasites responsible for the disease. Painting the walls of a house with DDT keeps the mosquitoes away for six months to a year.

It is no wonder, then, that the affected countries are reluctant to support an absolute ban on DDT until affordable and effective alternatives are available. Negotiations are still under way, through the United Nations, on a global treaty to regulate persistent organic pollutants including DDT. Favoring the treaty are the industrialized countries that themselves used DDT without restraint for decades, but which are now concerned about contamination of food they import and with preventing the further spread of DDT in the oceans and atmosphere.

Yet world spending on malaria control and research for Africa is just 10 cents per case per year. Alternatives to DDT cost more than the affected countries can afford, even though they include inexpensive items like bed nets treated with less harmful insecticides and integrated pest management, which includes eliminating mosquito habitats.

The U.S. government, through the National Institutes of Health and programs being conducted by the Navy, is supporting research on a malaria vaccine. President Clinton has also issued a challenge to academia and industry to work with the government to find a vaccine. Karen Perry, an associate director of Physicians for Social Responsibility, is also coordinator of the International Persistent Organic Pollutants Network, which plays a key role in coordinating efforts to pass the global treaty. To achieve its passage, she says, "The United States and other countries who can afford it need to provide assistance to help the affected countries phase [use of DDT] out."

How much would this cost? One researcher estimated the necessary spending by Western nations at \$1 billion a year (about the same amount recently approved by the U.S. Senate for aid to Colombia to fight the drug war there). If the cost were shared, the researcher figured, it would work out to be 75 cents per American, less than the price of one bottle of iced tea. ■



# FOX SHOCKS THE WORLD

By Rick Rockwell

## MEXICO CITY

**W**hen Vicente Fox Quesada, Mexico's president-elect, travels to Washington in August, the old Mexican joke comparing the two countries and their politics will finally be laid to rest. The joke was: Mexico may have one party that always wins, but doesn't America have two identical parties that simply take turns? What's the difference?

Fox rendered the question moot, but it remains to be seen whether he will make a difference.

Fox is the man who brought the 71-year dominance of Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to an end. The media hailed his unexpected opposition victory as a triumph of modern democracy. He was portrayed as Mexico's John Wayne. In his custom boots, the 6-foot-6-inch former Coca-Cola executive and governor of the Mexican state of Guanajuato led the conservative National Action Party (PAN) to sweeping victories. Not only did Fox snare the presidency, but the PAN won gubernatorial races in Guanajuato and Morelos. Although no single party will have a clear majority, the PAN now has the most seats of any party in the lower house of Mexico's Congress. And while the PRI retains the most seats in Mexico's Senate, the PAN advanced there too.

Fox's victory means the PAN can now be something other than the loyal but weak opposition, a role it has played in Mexico's political system since 1939. The party was formed then as a response to the socialist programs of President Lázaro Cárdenas, a PRI leader who believed the "revolution" in the party's name meant land reform and nationalizing companies held by firms in the United States. The PAN became the counterbalance with support from conservative business



HERIBERTO RODRIGUEZ/REUTERS

Supporters of Vicente Fox celebrate in the streets of Mexico City.

groups that discouraged state intervention in commerce. The PAN is also pro-Catholic (Fox caused a stir during the campaign by proudly displaying the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe) in the face of the PRI's modern secularism.

Aside from his staunch anti-abortion stance (although Fox is divorced, he is the proud father of four adopted children) and pro-business leanings, the president-elect could shape up as a maverick. On the conservative side, he promises to wage an unrelenting war against drug trafficking and corruption. However, he admires some of Fidel Castro's policies, such as the need for a balance between private corporations and state-owned enterprises. He also came out on election night promising to resolve the thorny question of indigenous rights, which has flared into guerrilla insurgencies. And Fox has promised to disassemble much of Mexico's state security apparatus in the country's Interior Ministry. The Interior Ministry not only directed operations against guerrilla groups, but also conducted domestic spying on controversial journalists and citizens, and designed campaigns to destabilize opposition groups and parties throughout Mexico. When he comes to Washington to meet with President Clinton, Fox promises to push for vast numbers of new visas for Mexicans who wish to work north of the border.

Fox may show his independence by ignoring the counsel of longtime PANistas. Less than a week after his victory, he



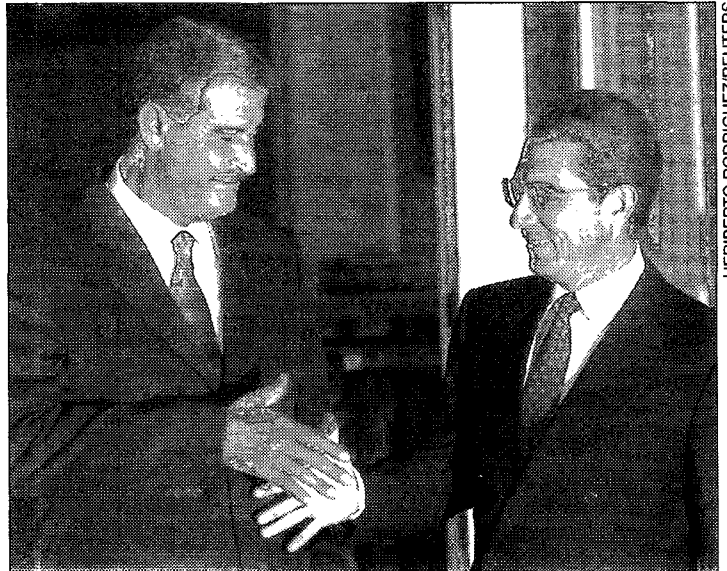
proclaimed, "in the end, who governs is Fox, not the PAN." Fox wants a "transition government," and he vowed to work with current President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon to give the country an orderly transfer of power until his inauguration in December. Besides cutting his coalition partners into the government, Fox says he wants to find the best people available for cabinet posts, regardless of party affiliations. He will likely include members of the country's left-wing and the PRI in his government.

Fox campaigned and won by convincing voters they had sufficient power to overturn what he called "an authoritarian dictatorship of the PRI." One of the few analysts to predict Fox's victory, George Grayson of the College of William & Mary, says his tours of rural areas convinced him the opposition could win. Mexicans told him they wanted change, and "Fox is the vehicle for it."

Although the PRI took 36 percent of the vote in the presidential race against Fox's 43 percent, some political experts like Lorenzo Meyer of El Colegio de Mexico wonder if the once formidable ruling party can survive. Until Fox's victory, the PRI's dominance was tied to its ability to co-opt the opposition. During the past 20 years of neoliberal leadership, the party—which once stood up for workers with anti-U.S. rhetoric—evolved to the point where PANista politicians complained the PRI had lifted their pro-business, pro-U.S. economic agenda almost intact. As Meyer notes, "The PRI has no ideology. They only have the power of the presidency."

Stripped of control of the central government, and unable to regulate the flow of favors, jobs and food from the public sector, Meyer says, the PRI's political muscle could wither quickly. Grayson adds that losing direct control over the 3.5 million federal patronage jobs the PRI now controls will hurt the most. "Those jobs are a powerful adhesive to keep the party together," he says.

## Now comes the hard part for Mexico's new president.



Fox is congratulated by outgoing President Ernesto Zedillo.

worst cases involved executives of the state-owned oil monopoly PEMEX pressuring workers to cast votes for the PRI. In the southern state of Chiapas, PRI organizers openly gave food or coupons for food to voters outside polling stations for their support.

Election monitoring groups, such as the U.S. National Democratic Institute (NDI) lauded the elections as sending a strong democratic signal. However, in its post-election review NDI also noted that vote buying, coercion and media bias were all problems that the country still must address. Mexico's Federal Election Institute (IFE) noted several times during the campaign that the country's media still seemed predisposed to support PRI candidate Francisco Labastida Ochoa. Although pre-election polls showed Fox and Labastida locked in a statistical tie, coverage on the Mexican

## NEW CHANCE FOR CHIAPAS

During an off-hand moment in the campaign, Vicente Fox promised he could end Mexico's stand-off with the Zapatista guerrillas in 15 minutes. Fox will soon get his chance to go into action.

Rather than taking the Rambo approach in the region, where the guerrillas and Mexico's military have observed an uneasy cease-fire for most of the past six years, Fox has promised to loosen the military's grip in Chiapas. Though military officials refuse to comment, Reuters reports there are 40,000 troops in the state. Human rights groups estimate the total could be three times as large.

Fox also has promised to implement the San Andreas Accords, a peace treaty negotiated with the Zapatistas but

never put into place by the Zedillo administration. The accords would grant limited autonomy to indigenous areas in the state.

The troubles in Chiapas are not limited to conflict between the army and the Zapatistas. Three weeks before the election, seven police officers were ambushed and killed in a zone known to be friendly to the Zapatistas. Investigators linked the crime to a paramilitary group known as Triple S, which supports the PRI. A similar paramilitary group was responsible for the notorious massacre at Acteal in December 1997, where 45 unarmed indigenous peasants were murdered.

Further increasing the level of danger in the state are armed smugglers who run contraband—everything from drugs

HERIBERTO RODRIGUEZ/REUTERS

networks and in many newspapers was slanted heavily in Labastida's favor. In the final weeks of the campaign, when more coverage shifted to Fox, most of it was negative.

Faced with losing its pull with public sector workers, small-town politicians and the media, the PRI has engaged in an internecine war of finger-pointing since its election defeat. Manuel Bartlett, a former Interior minister, notorious for engineering a PRI victory in 1988 when the country's vote-counting computers crashed, castigated Zedillo. "Zedillo says the party is to blame for the loss and not his policies, and that's false," Bartlett said.

Zedillo is credited with the quick, firm decision on election night to go on national television and publicly congratulate Fox, pledging to help with the transition. Zedillo made his announcement immediately after the IFE released its initial vote totals, which showed Fox with a wide lead. In 1988, opposition candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (the son of President Cárdenas and leader of the Revolutionary Democratic Party, or PRD) had jumped out to an early lead in the voting, only to see the suspect computer crash reverse his fortunes.

Only from the left come concerns about whether Fox truly represents change in Mexico. Subcommandante Marcos of the Zapatista guerrilla movement said Cárdenas was the sole candidate who could truly break with the country's power structure (see "New Chance for Chiapas," page 21). But Cárdenas captured only 17 percent of the vote this time.

The sole ray of hope for the left was the election of the PRD's Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador as mayor of Mexico City. Lopez Obrador fought back a strong challenge from Santiago Creel of the PAN, who is now managing Fox's transition team. Lopez Obrador may represent a new generation for the PRD, a party that will need to restructure after Cárdenas' third defeat.

Cárdenas has indicated he will not run again. Many felt his

old-school approach of using town meetings to build support couldn't compete against the highly polished television campaigns of his competitors. Jorge Castañeda, a key defector from the PRD, said Fox's victory would end Cárdenas' leadership of the left for good.

Staunch members of the PRD have countered that they will refuse to be part of Fox's governing coalition. Though the new president and his supporters like Castañeda are promising a left-wing social agenda, critics say the pro-business PAN can't be trusted to take that agenda seriously in the face of globalization. One of the first signs that business will take a frontseat in the Fox administration was the appointment of Luis Derbez to head his economic transition team. Derbez is a U.S.-trained economist who has worked for the World Bank.

Noam Chomsky also weighed in with his suspicions about Fox before the election. Interviewed in the left-wing paper *La Jornada*, Chomsky said the Mexican elections would be an illusion of real change. He said the system exists in an entrepreneurial dictatorship, which mandates that there be a perception of justice in the electoral process. Chomsky's point is that the policies of global forces such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. government and corporations play a greater role in Mexico than even its president.

But Fox's victory has created a debate about the possibility for real democracy in Mexico. How he attacks the myriad of Mexico's problems—from corruption and drugs to indigenous rights and programs for the 40 million Mexicans who live in extreme poverty—will show whether he is an independent thinker or an unimaginative neoliberal clone. All of Mexico is holding its breath, awaiting the answer. ■

**Rick Rockwell** teaches journalism at American University. He is a contributor to the new book, *Mexico: Facing the Challenges of Human Rights and Crime*.

to lumber—across the Guatemalan border. Indigenous evangelical groups also sometimes clash violently with Catholic communities in rural areas. Add to all this the scramble for land in a poor, mountainous state where rich landowners have often been exempted from land reform, and the potential for conflict remains high.

The Zedillo administration has boasted about the development projects it has poured into Chiapas for roads, schools and hospitals. Critics of the government contend that most of the funds have gone to road projects meant to give the military easier access to areas sympathetic with the Zapatistas. Indeed, the army is building new barracks and camps within easy driving distance of Acteal. Much of the housing looks permanent, with concrete floors, a luxury in this area where much of the population lives in small shacks. The counter-insurgency strategy for now seems to be to guard small villages to keep guerrilla groups from recruiting.

Gloria Sesma, a human rights volunteer from Mexico City, works in some of the indigenous communities displaced by the low-intensity war. She complains about the corruption and crime that has followed the army into these remote mountains. "Prostitution is the worst," she says. "These communities knew nothing about prostitution before the war. Now there are soldiers camped near every small

community, and they pressure the young girls."

Three weeks before the elections, in an effort to calm tensions, Sesma and other international human rights workers organized a free peace concert for the region. Thousands of Zapatista supporters streamed into Oventic from communities around Chiapas to hear Mexican crooner Oscar Chavez and other musical acts. Even the military cooperated, running only cursory vehicle checks.

After the election, Sesma was less optimistic about the chances for peace. Unlike some prominent leftists like Jorge Castañeda, who threw their support behind Fox, she called the election "a nightmare." Sesma feels a former Coca-Cola executive and leader of a pro-business party can't be sincere when he talks about indigenous rights and real peace.

But not everyone is so pessimistic. Father Gonzalo Ituarte, one of the Catholic Church's main proponents of human rights in Chiapas, called Fox's victory a new opportunity for peace. So far, the Zapatistas have not released an official communiqué in response to the election results.

Besides Fox's vaunted promise to quickly deal with the state, the next real test for Chiapas will be the August governor's race, which pits Sami David of the PRI against challenger Pablo Salazar, backed by an unlikely coalition of the PAN, PRD and smaller parties. ■



# TIJUANA TROUBLES

## NAFTA is failing Mexican workers

By David Bacon

### TIJUANA, MEXICO

**D**ebate has raged over whether NAFTA's labor side-agreement protects workers rights since the treaty took effect in January 1994. But its uselessness was clearly demonstrated in June when supporters of Mexico's best-known independent union were beaten at a hearing supposedly organized to guarantee their rights.

As strikers from the Han Young factory and other members and supporters of the October 6 union walked into a ballroom at Tijuana's swanky Camino Real hotel, they were beaten and driven out by members of the Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Peasants (CROC), a government-affiliated union. Though the attack was witnessed by U.S. Deputy Labor Secretary Lewis Karesh and his Mexican counterpart Javier Moctezuma Barragan, neither made a public denunciation of the beatings.

Ironically, the Mexican Labor Ministry had organized the meeting, a "seminar on union freedom in Mexico," to explain two new agreements it signed in May promising to protect the right of workers to form independent unions. The case that led to one of the accords was that of the very people beaten and left outside—the 57 workers whose strike at the Han Young factory was the first by an independent union at the maquiladoras. "They threw us out because it was impossible to maintain the pretense that the freedom to organize independent unions exists while we were present in the room, living evidence of the lie," says Enrique Hernandez, general secretary of October 6, who was the target of the most violent attacks.

Workers at the Korean-owned Han Young plant, which welds truck frames for Tijuana's huge Hyundai industrial complex, began their independent union effort in June 1997. Complaining of low wages and serious safety hazards, they sought to reject the CROC union that represented them. CROC had a so-called "protection contract" with Han Young, in which the company made monthly payments to a CROC leader in return for a guarantee that the union would not challenge low wages and poor conditions. "There are about 650,000 union contracts in Mexico, but only 50,000 of them are real negotiated agreements," explains Jose Luis Hernandez, vice president of Mexico's new national democratic union federation, the National Union of Workers. "The rest are protection agreements. The people who benefit from them are a kind of Mafia."

**W**hen NAFTA went into effect, however, enforcing labor rights in Mexico became a responsibility of more than just the Mexican government. All three NAFTA countries also signed the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation, in which each pledged to enforce its own labor laws and set up

a process for hearing complaints of labor rights violations. In the ensuing years, nearly 20 complaints have been filed.

The highest-profile cases have been at Han Young and ITAPSA, a U.S.-owned plant in Mexico City. At both factories, U.S. and Mexican unions have alleged that workers were prevented from exercising their legal right to organize independent unions. They also claim that Mexico has failed to enforce its health-and-safety laws at the factories. The ITAPSA complaint charged that workers were routinely exposed to asbestos.

Under the NAFTA process, the U.S. Labor Department held a series of hearings and concluded that serious violations of Mexican law had occurred. In May, U.S. Labor Secretary Alexis Herman and her Mexican counterpart, Mariano Palacios Alcocer, signed agreements to settle the Han Young and ITAPSA cases. Mexico agreed to hold two



Enrique Hernandez (with finger raised) and other unionists after being beaten and expelled from the Camino Real hotel.

seminars to discuss protection for workers organizing independent unions and better enforcement of health-and-safety laws. The Tijuana meeting was the first; another supposedly will take place in Mexico City. The agreements, however, do not require concrete changes for workers in either plant.

The independent unions had particularly high hopes for the health-and-safety complaints. While NAFTA has no penalties for denying workers their right to form independent unions, Mexico could have been fined a percentage of its export earnings—potentially a huge amount of money—for health-and-safety violations. But with the settlement agreements, that possibility was removed. "Nothing will actually change at ITAPSA," says Benedicto Martinez, general secretary of the Authentic Labor Front (FAT), which led the fight at

DAVID BACON

ITAPSA. "The Mexican government has a long history of finding reasons not to enforce its own laws protecting workers."

At Han Young, once October 6 won the legal right to represent workers two and a half years ago, the plant's owners were then legally required to negotiate and sign a contract. They have yet to do so. When workers struck in 1998, the Baja California labor board ruled their strike illegal. The Mexican district court has overruled that decision three times, most recently in April, and has ordered the labor board to protect the workers' right to strike. Yet for two years, the board has refused to implement those orders. Instead, Tijuana and Baja California authorities have called in the police to remove the strikers' picket lines, burn their strike flags and escort strikebreakers into the plant—even though it is illegal in Mexico for a company to hire and operate with scabs during a legal strike.

"The settlements haven't remedied our situation at all," charges Jose Peñaflor, an attorney for October 6. "The violence today has its roots in efforts by corrupt union leaders to hold onto their protection contracts. The problem is the enforcement of the law. Despite what the government says, Mexico's labor policy is actually hardening. It's clearer than ever that it won't permit any kind of independent union on the border."

At the WTO meetings in Seattle last December, the Clinton administration argued that free trade agreements could protect workers rights while boosting profits for large corporations. It pointed to NAFTA's labor side-agreement as proof of its claim. Al Gore went even further, claiming that as president he would guarantee the enforcement of labor rights in future trade negotiations.

Yet the actual record of the side-agreement is dismal. As a result of all the complaints filed since 1994, only one of the many workers fired for independent union activity has been rehired, and not a single contract has been signed. Karesh, the Labor Department official who oversees the side-agreement, says that because the treaty is between governments, "we can't get a particular worker's job back, or try to resolve cases in favor of particular groups of workers."

Karesh was "disappointed to see what happened" at the meeting in Tijuana, but points out that the Mexican government did promise two important reforms in the settlement agreements. It said that workers would be able to choose the union to represent them by secret ballot in future elections—now they must announce their vote in public—and it agreed to publish a list of all union contracts, which would make protection contracts public knowledge for the first time.

The real question is whether these commitments will be enforced. "I believe we will begin to see an impact," Karesh says. "But will there be immediate change? I don't think so."

According to Robin Alexander, director of international affairs for the United Electrical Workers, which supported FAT in its fight at ITAPSA, unions must recognize that the NAFTA process itself is fatally flawed. To protect workers rights adequately, she says, "we need a separate entity that has teeth, that has the power to require enforcement. It's obvious now that NAFTA won't sanction governments when they violate workers rights, and that companies can't be held accountable either. We don't want more meetings and further study. We want real changes." ■

# GET THE WORD ON THE POLITICS OF AMERICA.

## Buy A Subscription—Get a Free Hardcover Book

Molly Ivins calls Texas the National Laboratory for Bad Government. Read about your future in *The Texas Observer*. Molly Ivins, Jim Hightower, James K. Galbraith, a biweekly Bush Beat, and a critical, irreverent look at the Great State that George W. and Poppy call home. Subscribe now for one year at \$32 (24 issues) and select one of the following:

***Shrub: The Short But Happy Political Life of George W. Bush*** – Molly Ivins and Lou Dubose (Random House, 2000)

***If the Gods Had Meant Us to Vote, They Would Have Given Us Candidates*** – Jim Hightower (HarperCollins, 2000)

***Development as Freedom*** – Amartya Sen (Alfred A. Knopf, 1999)

YES! Please send me ☐ *Shrub* or ☐ *If the Gods Had Meant Us to Vote* or ☐ *Development as Freedom*.

Mail book and subscription to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

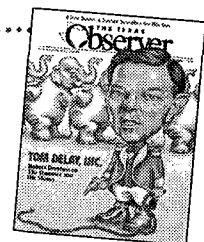
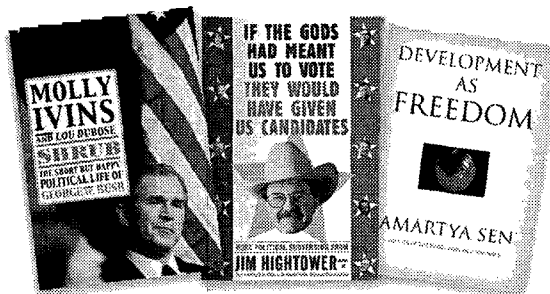
Street \_\_\_\_\_ City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Send a check or credit card information to: The Texas Observer/Books, 307 W. 7th Street, Austin, Texas 78701

Credit Card: ☐ Master Card ☐ Visa ☐ American Express

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

To order by phone: 1-800-939-6620 or 512-477-0746. For more information, call or visit us online: [www.texasobserver.org](http://www.texasobserver.org)



ITT



# UNIONS Get Religion

BY DAVID MOBERG

**C**hanting "si se puede"—yes, we can—and shaking noisemakers, a hundred mostly Latino janitors marched through the hallways of a suburban Chicago office building in June, demanding recognition of their union. They were joined by an unusual contingent of supporters—two dozen students from various seminaries and theology schools who were preparing for a 10-week summer stint working with unions across the country.

They included political veterans like Ellen Winters, a 48-year-old registered nurse who had marched against the Vietnam War and for civil rights, later deciding to enter the Lutheran ministry after her children had grown up. There were also relative novices like Kate Holbrook, a 28-year-old Mormon studying at Harvard Divinity School, who admitted she "didn't know anything about unions" but had been moved by the plight of women workers in developing countries.

"Seminary Summer," modeled on the successful Union Summer program for university students and young workers, is the latest manifestation of a growing alliance between the labor movement and religious leaders. Under President John Sweeney, a devout Catholic, the AFL-CIO has given new emphasis to forging coalitions with constituencies like students, academics, environmentalists and critics of globalization, but the ties to clergy and churches may prove one of the most fruitful new alliances.

The driving force behind the labor-religion coalition is the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, the brainchild of 45-year-old Kim Bobo, who started a Chicago interfaith labor committee in 1991, then launched the national organization in 1996. Raised a fundamentalist Protestant, and now a choir director at a Church of Christ congregation, Bobo worked for Bread for the World and the Midwest Academy, which trains organizers, before the 1990 Pittston Coal strike inspired thoughts about organizing religious support

for labor. While religious leaders have episodically backed labor in local disputes or national coalitions, the National Interfaith Committee is creating a rapidly growing organizational structure—now including 55 chapters with as many as 10 more expected this year—that encourages systematic collaboration between organized religion and unions.

These chapters already have proven to be key allies in winning living-wage ordinances, supporting organizing drives and strikes, advancing rights of unorganized workers,



"Seminary Summer" sends a group of theology students for a 10-week stint working with unions across the country.

protesting sweatshops and pressuring anti-union employers—including religious bodies that run hospitals, nursing homes and other businesses. They have taught church leaders and members about the common values of social justice shared by the labor movement, especially through the Labor Day weekend "labor in the pulpit" program, where union members speak to their congregations about their faith and their unions. The program grew from a local Chicago effort in 1996 to more than 700 services last year and possibly 1,000 for this coming Labor Day. "This thing has taken off way faster than I ever dreamed it would," Bobo says. "Our timing was right. The labor leadership needed it but didn't

PHOTOS: DENISE STARKEY

**Seminary Summer students learn about the labor movement during orientation in Chicago.**

know how to do it, and the religious community knew it needed to do it."

Bobo acknowledges that much of the religious community still sees "unions as corrupt, out of touch, irrelevant or mobsters. We've got to help people understand there's corruption in unions just like in the religious community, but these are vehicles of justice."

**T**hough most faiths firmly support the right of workers to organize, the relationship between labor and religious institutions has been checkered. Starting in the late 19th century, the social gospel movement was a strong ally of unions, and there were a variety of organizations—from Catholic, Protestant and Jewish traditions—over the past century that mobilized believers on behalf of workers, especially during the Depression. Religious leaders backed Cesar Chavez's farmworker organizing in the '60s, and the Rev. Martin Luther King was supporting striking sanitation workers when he was assassinated.

But it's also true that religious leaders—derided by the Wobblies as "sky pilots"—often have actively discouraged unions and labor militancy, or organized anti-Communist worker movements that dampened labor radicalism. Most churches today implement their teachings on social justice or concern for the poor through charity, not organizing to give people greater power, and the influence of business people discourages many clergy from embracing workers' struggles. The religious left and labor were estranged from the late '60s on, especially over the wars in Vietnam and Central America.

But changes in the labor movement and the economy—the growth of inequality and low-wage work, especially among swelling ranks of immigrants—have created fertile ground for a new coalition. Religious leaders are typically more attracted to unions as a means of uplifting the oppressed than providing a voice for skilled workers who make a living wage. As unions have devoted more efforts to organizing the poorest workers—janitors, hotel housekeepers, poultry workers and nursing home attendants, for example—unions such as the Service Employees (SEIU), Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE), and United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) have taken prominent roles in the new labor-religion alliance.

Bobo still finds a wide range of responses by unions to religious allies—from total indifference through curiosity to tactical exploitation. Pro-union clergy often lament the "dial-a-priest" mentality of union leaders who call at the last minute to get a clerical collar as a prop for a rally.



There are also big differences within the religious community. Though Catholic, Jewish and Protestant traditions are well represented in coalitions, the National Interfaith Committee also has brought in Muslim clerics and some urban evangelical churches, which often are popular among recent immigrants. Whether a church or cleric backs workers, Bobo says, "often comes down to class and not theology. You find me a congregation with a lot of low-wage workers in it, and I'll show you a congregation with support for union organizing. Congregations with a lot of managers will not be as supportive."

Bobo's goal is to develop trust between religious and labor leaders so that clergy can be involved in early strategic planning. Organizers could identify churches of prospective union members, for example, then call on the workers' ministers to provide support in the face of intimidation from anti-union employers. In Milwaukee, where an Interfaith Conference recently has been revived, Labor Council President John Goldstein is enthusiastic because churches "share our concerns with what's happening in the economy" and because "they contribute moral authority."

Unions and religious allies have fought to defend Milwaukee public schools, improved the labor practices of Catholic institutions, and campaigned for legislation that would give preference to employers who were not anti-union. "The next step is to engage in strategic planning with labor and religious allies about the local economy," Goldstein says. "We feel we can move from issue work to ongoing, permanent coalition work."

Labor leaders are more likely to work well with religious coalitions if they've broken with business union traditions and see themselves representing all workers, not just their members, argues Steve Cagan, coordinator of Cleveland Jobs for Justice, which is part of a pioneering network of religious and labor alliances. As unions and church groups have worked together, they have broadened each other's visions: Minneapolis unions began working for public housing, and Milwaukee unions joined a campaign against landmines. In Chicago religious groups and SEIU are



looking into forming a unionized janitor cooperative to clean up church properties.

Clergy involvement helps underscore the ethical dimension of union struggles and gives legitimacy to workers' demands. Often it gives workers courage to take action because they feel they have a moral as well as material cause. "Workers say to us that it means so much that they're not in this alone," says Ron Krietemeyer of the Twin Cities Religion and Labor Network in Minnesota, "that other groups support them, and it's not even their own church but this respected group speaking out for their rights." The network has played a prominent role over the past year in defending hotel workers, both resisting harassment of undocumented workers by immigration authorities and supporting a citywide hotel strike.

The presence of clergy can temper employers' hostility to unions or provide a channel of communication. When SEIU was organizing janitors in Silicon Valley by pressuring the big companies that hired cleaning contractors, the union eventually let the local interfaith coalition bargain with Apple Computer. "Apple cared so much more about the community than the union," says Jon Barton, who led the successful campaign. "It would never have happened if we hadn't had religious and community leaders there."

Church leaders also can bring both moral and financial pressure. When AFSCME (public workers) was organizing a home for developmentally disabled people, the union discovered the owner was Catholic and organized a meeting between him and a group of priests. "This poor man was terrified," Bobo says. "It had dragged on for years, but a week or so later, he settled."

In Minneapolis, when an airline caterer, Sky Chef, fought a HERE organizing drive among workers largely hired from former welfare ranks through Catholic Charities and Lutheran Social Services, the two churches warned that they would not refer workers if working conditions weren't decent. "The union came back and said, 'I don't know what you did, but it made a difference,'" Krietemeyer recalls.

In Las Vegas, a well-staffed Interfaith Council regularly has supported HERE campaigns to organize hotels and fight erosion of wage and benefit standards through subcontracting. It also has supported the Carpenters Union in trying to organize the heavily immigrant workforce, partly by exposing abusive practices in the industry and pressuring the school district not to employ scowflaw contractors. Recently it published a "Black Book of Nevada Employers"—a play on the "black book" of gamblers banned from casinos. Soon it will open a workers rights center to inform low-wage workers about their rights, how to file complaints and how to organize.

## Whether a church backs workers often comes down to class and not theology.

The Chicago chapter has expanded its efforts beyond its core union support as well. Working with the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, it has started organizing day laborers. It put together marches and meetings to win back pay for 500 laid-off, nonunion workers at a cosmetics factory. Now, working with the Department of Labor, the Interfaith Committee has negotiated a pilot project to create a consolidated complaint form for five different agencies, including those overseeing workplace safety and minimum wage violations, and to train religious and community group representatives to file complaints on behalf of workers.

As this coalition gains strength, there is also the possibility that union and church strategies will diverge at times. While the emphasis of religious leaders on reconciliation and compromise could prove problematic for unions at some point, Cagan argues that now it is more likely for religious activists to press for militant or confrontational tactics over principles,

while union leaders tend to be more pragmatic.

In the future, Bobo hopes that Seminary Summer will lead to changes in seminary curricula and a new awareness of worker struggles among the next generation of clergy. She also hopes to

push for respect for labor rights among religious institutional employers and to reach more members of congregations with the message of how their own faiths support organizing for justice on the job. It is unlikely that a large percentage of American churchgoers will become militant labor advocates, but the impact of a well-organized minority could be a giant boost for labor.

However, Barton warns that employers have begun using their money and influence to line-up church leaders on their side as well. The effort to bring the moral authority of religion to the aid of workers could turn into a battle for the souls of the churches themselves. ■

### After Seattle:

A New Internationalism?

A special double issue of  
*Monthly Review*

The protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle in November and December 1999 surprised people across the globe. Readers familiar with recent protests and those new to the issues will discover in this collection clear, accessible approaches to some of the burning questions of our time. Written for a wide audience, this special issue of *Monthly Review* promises to be an invaluable resource for scholars as well as activists.

#### CONTENTS

**Toward a New Internationalism**  
by the Editors

**Marx and Internationalism**  
by John Bellamy Foster

**The Language of Globalization**  
by Peter Marcuse

**Turtles, Teamsters and Capital's Designs**  
by William K. Tabb

**"Workers of All Countries, Unite"**  
by Michael Yates

**The Future of the Labor Left**  
by Khalil Hassan

**World Labor Needs Independence and Solidarity** by David Bacon

**Strategic Thinking About Movement Building**  
by Martin Hart-Landsberg

**Defunding the Fund, Running on the Bank**  
by Patrick Bond

**Where Was the Color in Seattle?**  
by Elizabeth (Betita) Martinez

**Address to the South Summit**  
by Fidel Castro

#### TO ORDER

1-4 copies: \$10 each / 5-24 copies: \$8 each / postage: add \$3 for 1-4 copies, \$7 for 5-24 copies

MONTHLY REVIEW / 122 West 27th Street, 10th floor / NY, NY 10001 / mraub@monthlyreview.org / 1.800.670.0430

# Give It Away

By David Graeber

**H**ave you noticed how there aren't any new French intellectuals any more? There was a veritable flood in the late '70s and early '80s: Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard, Kristeva, Lyotard, de Certeau ... but there has been almost no one since. Trendy academics and intellectual hipsters have been forced to endlessly recycle theories now 20 or 30 years old, or turn to countries like Italy or even Slovenia for dazzling meta-theory.

There are a lot of reasons for this. One has to do with politics in France itself, where there has been a concerted effort on the part of media elites to replace real intellectuals with American-style empty-headed pundits. Still, they have not been completely successful. More important, French intellectual life has become much more politically engaged. In the U.S. press, there has been a near blackout on cultural news from France since the great strike movement of 1995, when France was the first nation to definitively reject the "American model" for the economy, and refused to begin dismantling its welfare state. In the American press, France immediately became the silly country, vainly trying to duck the tide of history.

Of course this in itself is hardly going to faze the sort of Americans who read Deleuze and Guattari. What American academics expect from France is an intellectual high, the ability to feel one is participating in wild, radical ideas—demonstrating the inherent violence within Western conceptions of truth or humanity, that sort of thing—but in ways that do not imply any program of political action; or, usually, any responsibility to act at all. It's easy to see how a class of people who are considered almost entirely irrelevant both by political elites and by 99 percent of the general population might feel this way. In other words, while the U.S. media represent France as silly, U.S. academics seek out those French thinkers who seem to fit the bill.

As a result, some of the most interesting scholars in France today you never

hear about at all. One such is a group of intellectuals who go by the rather unwieldy name of *Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales*, or MAUSS, and who have dedicated themselves to a systematic attack on the philosophical underpinnings of economic theory. The group take their inspiration from the great early-20th century French sociologist Marcel

Mauss, whose most famous work, *The Gift* (1925), was perhaps the most magnificent

Durkheim, is considered the founder of modern sociology. Durkheim surrounded himself with a circle of brilliant young acolytes, among whom Mauss was appointed to study religion. The circle, however, was shattered by World I; many died in the trenches, including Durkheim's son, and Durkheim himself died of grief shortly thereafter. Mauss was left to pick up the pieces.

By all accounts, though, Mauss was never taken completely seriously in his role of heir apparent; a man of extraordinary erudition (he knew at least a dozen languages, including Sanskrit, Maori and classical Arabic), he still, somehow, lacked the gravity expected of a *grand professeur*. A former amateur



Pioneering French anthropologist Marcel Mauss (inset) studied "gift economies" like those of the Kwakiutl of British Columbia. His conclusions were startling.

refutation of the assumptions behind economic theory ever written. At a time when "the free market" is being rammed down everyone's throat as both a natural and inevitable product of human nature, Mauss' work—which demonstrated not only that most non-Western societies did not work on anything resembling market principles, but that neither do most modern Westerners—is more relevant than ever. While Francophile American scholars seem unable to come up with much of anything to say about the rise of global neoliberalism, the MAUSS group is attacking its very foundations.

**A** word of background. Marcel Mauss was born in 1872 to an Orthodox Jewish family in Vosges. His uncle, Émile

boxer, he was a burly man with a playful, rather silly manner, the sort of person always juggling a dozen brilliant ideas rather than building great philosophical systems. He spent his life working on at least five different books (on prayer, on nationalism, on the origins of money, etc.), none of which he ever finished. Still, he succeeded in training a new generation of sociologists and inventing French anthropology more or less single-handedly, as well as in publishing a series of extraordinarily innovative essays, just about each one of which has generated an entirely new body of social theory all by itself.

Mauss was also a revolutionary socialist. From his student days on he was a regular contributor to the left press, and remained most of his life an active mem-



ber of the French cooperative movement. He founded and for many years helped run a consumer co-op in Paris; and was often sent on missions to make contact with the movement in other countries (for which purpose he spent time in Russia after the revolution). Mauss was not a Marxist, though. His socialism was more in the tradition of Robert Owen or Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: He considered Communists and Social Democrats to be equally misguided in believing that society could be transformed primarily through government action. Rather, the role of government, he felt, was to provide the legal framework for a socialism that had to be built from the ground up, by creating alternative institutions.

The Russian revolution thus left him profoundly ambivalent. While exhilarated by prospects of a genuine socialist experiment, he was outraged by the Bolsheviks' systematic use of terror, their suppression of democratic institutions, and most of all by their "cynical doctrine that the end justifies the means," which, Mauss concluded, was really just the amoral, rational calculus of the marketplace, slightly transposed.

Mauss' essay on "the gift" was, more than anything, his response to events in Russia—particularly Lenin's New Economic Policy of 1921, which abandoned earlier attempts to abolish commerce. If the market could not simply be legislated away, even in Russia, probably the least monetarized European society, then clearly, Mauss concluded, revolutionaries were going to have to start thinking a lot more seriously about what this "market" actually was, where it came from, and what a viable alternative to it might actually be like. It was time to bring the results of historical and ethnographic research to bear.

Mauss' conclusions were startling. First of all, almost everything that "economic science" had to say on the subject of economic history turned out to be entirely untrue. The universal assumption of free market enthusiasts, then as now, was that what essentially drives human beings is a desire to maximize their pleasures, comforts and material possessions (their "utility"), and that all significant human interactions can thus be analyzed in market

terms. In the beginning, goes the official version, there was barter. People were forced to get what they wanted by directly trading one thing for another. Since this was inconvenient, they eventually invented money as a universal medium of exchange. The invention of further technologies of exchange (credit, banking, stock exchanges) was simply a logical extension.

The problem was, as Mauss was quick to note, there is no reason to believe a society based on barter has ever existed. Instead, what anthropologists were discovering were societies where economic life was based on utterly different principles, and most objects moved back and

**In the American press, France has become the silly country, vainly trying to duck the neoliberal tide of history.**

forth as gifts—and almost everything we would call "economic" behavior was based on a pretense of pure generosity and a refusal to calculate exactly who had given what to whom. Such "gift economies" could on occasion become highly competitive, but when they did it was in exactly the opposite way from our own: Instead of vying to see who could accumulate the most, the winners were the ones who managed to give the most away. In some notorious cases, such as the Kwakiutl of British Columbia, this could lead to dramatic contests of liberality, where ambitious chiefs would try to outdo one another by distributing thousands of silver bracelets, Hudson Bay blankets or Singer sewing machines, and even by destroying wealth—sinking famous heirlooms in the ocean, or setting huge piles of wealth on fire and daring their rivals to do the same.

All of this may seem very exotic. But as Mauss also asked: How alien is it, really? Is there not something odd about the very idea of gift-giving, even in our own society? Why is it that, when one receives a gift from a friend (a drink, a dinner invitation, a compliment), one

feels somehow obliged to reciprocate in kind? Why is it that a recipient of generosity often somehow feels reduced if he or she cannot? Are these not examples of universal human feelings, which are somehow discounted in our own society—but in others were the very basis of the economic system? And is it not the existence of these very different impulses and moral standards, even in a capitalist system such as our own, that is the real basis for the appeal of alternative visions and socialist policies? Mauss certainly felt so.

In a lot of ways Mauss' analysis bore a marked resemblance to Marxist theories about alienation and reification being developed by figures like György Lukács around the same time. In gift economies, Mauss argued, exchanges do not have the impersonal qualities of the capitalist marketplace: In fact, even when objects of great value change hands, what really matters is the relations between the people; exchange is about creating friendships, or working out rivalries, or obligations, and only incidentally about moving around valuable goods. As a result everything becomes personally charged, even property: In gift economies, the most famous objects of wealth—heirloom necklaces, weapons, feather cloaks—always seem to develop personalities of their own.

In a market economy it's exactly the other way around. Transactions are seen simply as ways of getting one's hands on useful things; the personal qualities of buyer and seller should ideally be completely irrelevant. As a consequence everything, even people, start being treated as if they were things too. (Consider in this light the expression "goods and services.") The main difference with Marxism, however, is that while Marxists of his day still insisted on a bottom-line economic determinism, Mauss held that in past market-less societies—and by implication, in any truly humane future one—"the economy," in the sense of an autonomous domain of action concerned solely with the creation and distribution of wealth, and which proceeded by its own, impersonal logic, would not even exist.

Mauss was never entirely sure what his practical conclusions were. The

Russian experience convinced him that buying and selling could not simply be eliminated in a modern society, at least "in the foreseeable future," but a market ethos could. Work could be co-operatized, effective social security guaranteed and, gradually, a new ethos created whereby the only possible excuse for accumulating wealth was the ability to give it all away. The result: a society whose highest values would be "the joy of giving in public, the delight in generous artistic expenditure, the pleasure of hospitality in the public or private feast."

Some of this may seem awfully naïve from today's perspective, but Mauss' core insights have, if anything, become even more relevant now than they were 75 years ago—now that economic "science" has become, effectively, the revealed religion of the modern age. So it seemed, anyway, to the founders of MAUSS.

**T**he idea for MAUSS was born in 1980. The project is said to have emerged from a conversation over lunch between a French sociologist, Alain Caillé, and a Swiss anthropologist, Gérard Berthoud. They had just sat through several days of an interdisciplinary conference on the subject of gifts, and after reviewing the papers, they came to the shocked realization that it did not seem to have occurred to a single scholar in attendance that a significant motive for giving gifts might be, say, generosity, or genuine concern for another person's welfare. In fact, the scholars at the conference invariably assumed that "gifts" do not really exist: Scratch deep enough behind any human action, and you'll always discover some selfish, calculating strategy. Even more oddly, they assumed that this selfish strategy was always, necessarily, the real truth of the matter; that it was more real somehow than any other motive in which it might be entangled. It was as if to be scientific, to be "objective" meant to be completely cynical. Why?

Caillé ultimately came to blame Christianity. Ancient Rome still preserved something of the older ideal of aristocratic open-handedness: Roman magnates built public gardens and monuments, and vied to sponsor the most magnificent games. But Roman generosity was also quite obviously meant to wound: One favorite habit was scatter-

ing gold and jewels before the masses to watch them tussle in the mud to scoop them up. Early Christians, for obvious reasons, developed their notion of charity in direct reaction to such obnoxious practices. True charity was not based on any desire to establish superiority, or favor, or indeed any egoistic motive

## **Ignored by American academics, scholars in MAUSS attack the very foundations of economic theory.**

whatsoever. To the degree that the giver could be said to have gotten anything out of the deal, it wasn't a real gift.

But this in turn led to endless problems, since it was very difficult to conceive of a gift that did not benefit the giver in any way. Even an entirely selfless act would win one point with God. There began the habit of searching every act for the degree to which it could be said to mask some hidden selfishness, and then assuming that this selfishness is what's really important. One sees the same move reproduced so consistently in modern social theory. Economists and Christian theologians agree that if one takes pleasure in an act of generosity, it is somehow less generous. They just disagree on the moral implications. To counteract this very perverse logic, Mauss emphasized the "pleasure" and "joy" of giving: In traditional societies, there was not assumed to be any contradiction between what we would call self-interest (a phrase that, he noted, could not even be translated into most human languages) and concern for others; the whole point of the traditional gift is that it furthers both at the same time.

These, anyway, were the kind of issues that first engaged the small, interdisciplinary group of French and French-speaking scholars (Caillé, Berthoud, Ahmet Insel, Serge Latouche, Pauline Taieb) who were to become MAUSS. Actually, the group itself began as a journal, called *Revue du MAUSS*—a very small journal, printed sloppily on bad paper—whose authors conceived it as much as an in-joke as a venue for seri-

ous scholarship, the flagship journal for a vast international movement that did not then exist. Caillé wrote manifestos; Insel penned fantasies about great international anti-utilitarian conventions of the future. Articles on economics alternated with snatches from Russian novelists. But gradually, the movement did begin to materialize. By the mid-'90s, MAUSS had become an impressive network of scholars—ranging from sociologists and anthropologists to economists, historians and philosophers, from Europe, North Africa and the Middle East—whose ideas had become represented in three different journals and a prominent book series (all in French) backed up by annual conferences.

**S**ince the strikes of 1995 and the election of a Socialist government, Mauss' own works have undergone a considerable revival in France, with the publication of a new biography and a collection of his political writings. At the same time, the MAUSS group themselves have become evermore explicitly political. In 1997, Caillé released a broadside called "30 Theses for a New Left," and the MAUSS group have begun dedicating their annual conferences to specific policy issues. Their answer to the endless calls for France to adopt the "American model" and dismantle its welfare state, for example, was to begin promulgating an economic idea originally proposed by American revolutionary Tom Paine: the guaranteed national income. The real way to reform welfare policy is not to begin stripping away social benefits, but to reframe the whole conception of what a state owes its citizens. Let us jettison welfare and unemployment programs, they said. But instead, let us create a system where every French citizen is guaranteed the same starting income (say, \$20,000, supplied directly by the government)—and then the rest can be up to them.

It is hard to know exactly what to make of the Maussian left, particularly insofar as Mauss is being promoted now, in some quarters, as an alternative to Marx. It would be easy to write them off as simply super-charged social democrats, not really interested in the radical transformation of society. Caillé's "30 Theses," for example, agree with Mauss in conceding the inevitability of some



kind of market—but still, like him, look forward to the abolition of capitalism, here defined as the pursuit of financial profit as an end in itself. On another level, though, the Maussian attack on the logic of the market is more profound, and more radical, than anything else now on the intellectual horizon. It is hard to escape the impression that this is precisely why American intellectuals,

particularly those who believe themselves to be the most wild-eyed radicals, willing to deconstruct almost any concept except greed or selfishness, simply don't know what to make of the Maussians—why, in fact, their work has been almost completely ignored. ■

David Graeber is a professor of anthropology at Yale University.

## Good Fela

By Hillary Frey

Last year Nigeria held its first successful civilian election since 1979, ending 17 years of military rule. Party leaders rallied spiritedly—if not always peacefully—behind their

### Fela: The Life and Times of a Musical Icon

By Michael Veal  
Temple University Press  
313 pages, \$24.95

candidates; civilians ventured out to cast hand-marked ballots. Retired general Olusegun Obasanjo won the contest with 68 percent of the vote, promising an honest, development-oriented government. At the turn of the century, many have a restored hope for this largest of West African nations.

But should they? It's an under-reported fact in the Western press that this is Obasanjo's second time in office—in the '70s he spent four years as a military dictator. And although Obasanjo gave way willingly to a civilian government in 1979, the years of his rule were neither peaceful nor prosperous; instead they were all too typical of Nigeria's pervasively corrupt and repressive government. Abuses of power are already suspected in his new administration; international election monitors reported tainted poll results for the presidential race. And just last May, in an effort to destigmatize the unpopular Nigerian military, Obasanjo appointed former military chiefs to university chancellorships, raising the question of just how separate the government and military will be under this new leadership.

If Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, Nigeria's most popular music star, were alive today, he would have much to criticize in present-day Nigeria. A charismatic nationalist, a vehement dissident, a fearless, controversial, talented performer, he would have words for Obasanjo that, even under a democratic government, might get him in trouble. Through his signature brand of "afrobeat"—a politicized, African-American influenced, funk-up version of traditional Nigerian music—Fela provided a continuous, dangerous and often illegal critique of Nigeria's leaders from the early '70s until his death in 1997 from AIDS complications.

Yale ethnomusicologist Michael Veal, who played as a guest saxophonist with Fela and his Egypt 80 band, has written a book, *Fela: The Life and Times of a Musical Icon*, that both remembers Fela and illuminates his lasting relevance. Take Fela's 1981 song "International Thief Thief," transcribed in Veal's exhaustive biography. Dedicated to Obasanjo and Decca Records chairman M.K.O. Abiola—a

wealthy, powerful philanthropist who Fela despised as a darling of Western imperialism—"I.T.T." (a play on International Telegraph and Telephone, for which Abiola worked) describes both men as "thieves," "rats running over and under," and "men of low mentality."

But Veal's book is more than a catalog of Fela's lyrics. Following his life and musical development chronologically, Veal places Fela within the tumultuous and fascinating context of Nigeria's contemporary political culture, as well as the broad West African musical tradition. *Fela* supplies a crash course in Nigeria's chaotic and brutal post-colonial experience as much as it paints a portrait of the icon.

Olufela (Fela) Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti was born in 1938 in the southwestern Nigerian city of Abeokuta. His parents were a promi-



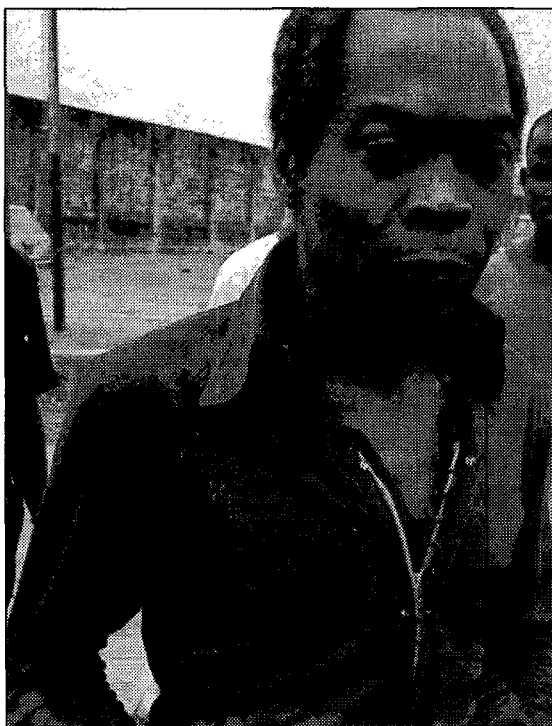
*We Strengthen Body & Soul*, by Belfast artist Conor McGrady, from his series *Retribution*. Part of the **Conflicted Views—Part 2** exhibit at NFA Space in Chicago, through August 5.

ment, upper-middle-class pair—his father an Anglican pastor, school administrator and teacher, and his mother, Funmilayo, a triumphant women's rights advocate. Veal points to Fela's mother as an early influence that led to her son's eventual social activism. A tireless activist, she founded the Nigerian Women's Union in 1949—which won the right to vote for Nigerian Women in 1959, just in time for the nation's first civilian elections. She was not only the first African woman to travel beyond the Iron Curtain and meet Chairman Mao; it is said that Funmilayo was the first Nigerian woman ever to drive a car.

After finishing high school and discovering the festive Lagos music scene, Fela decided to be a musician, despite his parents' disappointment. (Fela's siblings all went on to work in medicine.) To satisfy their hopes that he would earn an advanced degree, Fela enrolled at London's Trinity College of Music in the summer of 1958. There he discovered the American jazz of John Coltrane and Miles Davis, learned to play the trumpet and formed his first band, Koola Lobitos. He also shared an apartment for some time with his first cousin, the playwright and future Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka.

Returning to Nigeria in 1963, married with three children, and with greater musical confidence and competence, Fela assembled a new lineup, again under the name Koola Lobitos. Veal describes the band's music as a distinctive fusion—"a West African ballroom style combining big-band jazz horn sections, adapted indigenous folk songs, and Afro-Caribbean styles such as calypso and salsa"—that fell on somewhat stunned ears. The sound, with its multiple horns and complex arrangements, didn't catch on. Instead, American music blew in and took over the scene. James Brown's pure soul, promoting black pride in the late '60s, infiltrated West African dance clubs and diverted attention from indigenous bands. It was on a tour through Ghana in 1968, Veal tells us, that Fela decided to get competitive. By coining and promoting the name "afrobeat," Fela created a catchy label for his style that could rival "soul."

Having gained some popularity, Koola Lobitos toured the United States in 1969. Here, of all places, Fela found the political vision that would shape the rest of his life and music. Falling for Sandra Smith (one of many girlfriends outside his open marriage), an African-American singer and former Black Panther, Fela discovered an African consciousness that existed only outside the



Fela in 1993; he died from AIDS four years later.

borders of his own continent. "It's crazy," he told a *New York Times* reporter, "in the States people think the black power movement drew inspiration from Africa. All these Americans come over there looking for awareness. They don't realize they're the ones who've got it over here."

Approaching the decade's turn, in a bold stroke of nationalistic pride, Fela renamed his band—first Nigeria 70, then Afrika 70—to reflect his newly formed pan-Africanism. He also wrote "My Lady's Frustration," an homage to Smith. Composed with elements of highlife-jazz and rhythm-and-blues, layered with chants and horns, Veal says "My Lady's Frustration" "can be called the first true afrobeat song."

Fela's personal life changed after that tour, and his sense of purpose did too: "As soon as I got back home I started to

preach. ... And my music did start changing according to how I experienced the life and culture of my people." Refusing to perform older songs that dealt with the frivolous (although popular) themes of love and romance, Fela set himself to the earnest task of raising Nigerians' political awareness. By the mid-'70s, the first of his didactic songs was released. "Black Man's Cry" emphasizes the "black is beautiful" mantra Fela discovered in the United States: "Who is trying to convince you that your black complexion is inferior? ... There is nothing more beautiful than the black complexions you all are endowed with."

Afrika 70's popularity generally grew as Fela's rantish, angry singing developed, but the style alienated some of his most likely fans, too. Surprisingly, Veal reports, students were put off by him: "We all thought that guy Fela was crazy," recalled one University of Lagos student of a Fela performance on campus. "We decided never to invite him again."

Before traveling to the United States, Fela had been "a complete gentleman." But post-tour, Fela developed habits like smoking marijuana, which in Nigeria was not only considered anti-social but also illegal (smoking one joint could earn a sentence of death). He deserted both his traditional Yoruba and proper English for pidgin English, hoping to reach a wider audience and arguing that "Good English cannot convey the message in African music." He also abandoned the Afro-Spot, his first club in Lagos, and opened the Afrika Shrine, a venue large enough to hold 1,000 people, located just across the street from the Kalakuta Republic, Fela's communal home. There, one might encounter his mother, a random Lagos youth, or a Koola Lobitos band member. Fela himself might hold court from a toilet in the living room, wearing nothing more than a pair of white underpants. One might also see one of many girlfriends, for Fela had adopted San Francisco-style free love as well.

Eventually, Fela promoted his promiscuous lifestyle with force, calling it more

APPADE OBISEAN



"African" than monogamy. Defending his multiple partners, Fela said that "one man, one wife is not normal in Africa. ... It was not based on an African concept." Despite Fela's generally progressive beliefs, Sandra Smith's impressive outspokenness, and his mother's life's work on behalf of women, he felt that a woman could answer no higher calling than "motherhood." His song "Lady" explains: "A traditional African woman will dance a traditional dance / She know the man is master / She cooks for him / She will do anything he says." In 1978, Fela made a virtual mockery of the ritual he so strongly promoted, marrying 27 "traditional" women in the same day, most of whom had never even finished secondary school.

By the end of 1976, Fela had announced his desire to run for president in the civilian elections planned for 1979. The authorities were already unhappy with his lifestyle and popularity, and this caused further aggravation. They investigated his compound for involvement with drug dealing, prostitution and other illegal activities, and Fela was frequently searched and arrested by the police. Giving voice to his agitation, Fela recorded "Zombie"—his most popular song to date—a quick-tempoed, beat-driven dance song with Fela's smooth, even voice mocking the military that so often badgered him: "Zombie won't think, unless you tell him to think. ... No brains, no job, no sense—left, right, left."

But on February 18, 1977, the government got the best of him. More than a thousand armed soldiers stormed Kalakuta, lighting fire to an electrical generator, beating inhabitants, raping women, looting the surrounding area, and finally torching the entire compound. When the Lagos state government investigated the incident, it exonerated the military and blamed the violence on one "exasperated and unknown soldier."

Fela lost everything in the Kalakuta fire—including his instruments and recording equipment. To fight back, he focused on the election and formed his own political party, "Movement of the People" (MOP). The election passed without his candidacy, however—MOP failed to meet guidelines required to be

recognized as a legal party—and Fela turned back to music.

Afrika 70 called it quits in 1978, Veal writes, after members complained of underpayment and exploitation, not to mention wariness of Fela's growing political ambitions. But with Egypt 80, his new band, Fela sought to address corruption at all levels of government, to make his songs "more definite, less satirical," and to remind followers of tragic events in his own, and Nigeria's, history.

As Jamaican reggae and "world music" rose in international popularity in the late '70s and '80s, so did Fela. But the increasingly aggressive, political themes in Fela's music kept him from gaining worldwide fame. He also refused to perform his "greatest hits"—"I want my audience to feel me where I'm at, not where I was"—a disappointment to many fans. Conditions under the failing civil-

ever. Nigerians saw pro-democracy advocates thrown in jail or, even worse, killed. (In 1993, novelist Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed for criticizing the government's dealings with the Shell Oil company, which operates in the Niger Delta.) For whatever reason, Fela enjoyed a relatively hassle-free period in the '90s. Veal suggests this may have been because he kept a low profile, because the government did not want to harass another public figure after Saro-Wiwa, or because rumors of Fela's failing health were flying. But trouble returned again in 1996 when Abacha, claiming that Fela was unleashing a "reign of terror" on the nation's youth, arrested the 57-year-old singer for smoking pot.

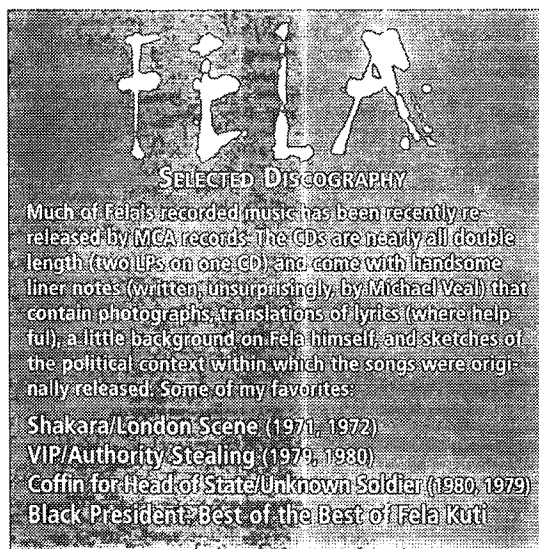
Through the last years of his life, Fela was constantly harassed and in and out of jail. During his last period of imprisonment, in 1997, Fela fell ill but refused medical treatment "on religious grounds."

Rumors circulated that he had AIDS, though the musician himself denied it, calling AIDS a "white man's disease." Fittingly, Fela's last song was "C.S.A.S." (Condom Scallywag and Scatter), which described his refusal ever to use a condom, and advised other men that using a condom is "un-African." On August 2, 1997, Fela died. His brother Beko, a doctor for some time with the World Health Organization, announced that the cause of Fela's death was related to AIDS; it was Beko's hope to undo some of what his brother had done, making the incurable illness a reality to Fela fans.

Though his account of Fela's life is excellent, Veal's passages on the music are perhaps less worthwhile:

His descriptions feel a bit labored, his language sometimes academic. Of course, the best way to encounter the music is on CD, and Fela re-releases seem to be everywhere. (I have been admiring a handsome box set available from Polygram for the equally handsome price of \$89.) With a little John Coltrane here, a touch of King Sunny Ade there, and a bit of James Brown on the fringes, Fela's music should appeal to many music lovers. But what plays loudest will always be Fela Kuti the preacher, one of the most beloved voices of Nigeria. ■

*Hillary Frey is the managing editor of Lingua Franca.*



ian government became increasingly repressive, and Nigerian record companies stopped releasing Fela's music. On the way to the United States for a tour in 1984, Fela was detained by customs officials and sentenced to two concurrent 5-year prison terms for illegal currency exportation. Promising record contracts with both Capitol and EMI were cancelled, and Fela went to prison. With General Ibrahim Babangida's assumption of power after a coup in late 1985, Fela was released after serving 18 months.

Rule under Babangida, who refused to turn the government over to civilians in 1993 as he had promised, and then under dictator Sani Abacha, was as repressive as

# Time's Arrow

By Carl Bromley

If our destiny is written in the stars, as some of Raúl Ruiz's films suggest, it is a strange fate that has plucked him from relative obscurity to international exposure with perhaps his 101st or

**Time Regained**  
Directed By Raúl Ruiz

103rd film, an astonishing adaptation of Marcel Proust's final volume in the *Remembrance of Things Past* cycle, *Time Regained*.

A younger Raúl Ruiz, engaged by Chile's ruling Socialists as its film adviser, planned to make a film predicting the overthrow of President Allende's government by the military. Shooting was planned to start September 12, 1973. But filmmaking was canceled when, on the day before, Gen. Augusto Pinochet actually realized Ruiz's nightmare. Months later Ruiz fled Chile, "just when the first filmmakers were being shot," he recently reminisced in the *Guardian*. "The arrests at that point were completely arbitrary and very chaotic—people were being shot just because they had moustaches."

Ruiz sought sanctuary in Paris where, over the next three decades, he made more than 100 films of a rare and curious vintage. Some were made in a week, some mislaid, others lost; they were about French politics, cookery, fictitious 19th century painters or Communist multimillionaires. Part Luis Buñuel, part Orson Welles (as Jonathan Romney has described him), Ruiz has been one of world cinema's best kept secrets, a sorcerer whose films mysteriously merge and multiply traditional time and narrative, blurring the distinction between reality and dream while engaging questions of fate and identity.

Using autobiography and fiction, *Time Regained* conflates the last days of Marcel Proust, who is racing against time to dictate and write the last pas-

sages of *Remembrance of Things Past*, with the events and characters of the work in progress itself. Old photographs and the faint smell of roses generate a flood of memories that coalesce in the period around World War I.

Marcel (played with agreeable aloofness by Italian actor Marcello Mazzarella, whose likeness to the real Proust is uncanny) is haunted by his lost



from Rachel's fits of jealousy in her dressing room to the whiplash on the Baron de Charlus' derriere. Aided by Ruiz's magic lantern, he alone can travel across time and space, commute with the spirits of the dead and (during the film's first childhood flashback) descend from a balcony, land on a lawn and doff his straw boater to fancy young Gilberte.

These aren't normal flashbacks. The impression instead is of a vast hotel where each time fragment is an adjacent room or corridor. The ailing Proust occupies the top floor, while three other Marceles cruise and often greet each other on the floors below. The effect is like a carousel ride. Rooms expand and contract, and scenery and extras sway and tremble in whirlpool-like fashion.

An earlier Proust adaptation, Volker Schlöndorff's literal, glossy, but ultimately stillborn *Swann in Love*, though more or less faithful to the plot, seemed petrified before Proust. Ruiz, however, has chosen Proust as a sparring partner and found a comrade, discovering the cinema in Proust, Proust's golden portal to the "world of dreams" and imagination. For both Proust and Ruiz, human experience

Marcel Proust

is often the province of these worlds. In *Remembrance of Things Past*, Swann's, Saint-Loup's and the narrator's devotion to their muses is sustained (and paradoxically crippled) by the power of illusion. And "imaginary events," as Ruiz has written, "have an appetite for existence": In Ruiz's *Three Lives and Only One Death* (1996), Marcello Mastroianni's industrialist learns that the family he has invented to evade income tax is actually coming to visit him.

Within this labyrinth of overlapping jealousies and infidelities, Ruiz invests Marcel with shamanic powers. He is the universal confidante and interlocutor, a social butterfly who sees everything,

When World War I intervenes in *Time Regained*, Marcel admits, "here in Paris we hardly feel the war." But war has transformed the Paris salons into a refuge of socialite stupidity.



Fashion is militarized. Everyone is an armchair Napoleon, even though the faux patriotism, particularly from the grotesque Madame Verdurin, would probably make the old emperor blush. The counterfeit nature of virtual warfare is conveyed vividly when Marcel, so absorbed by one of Gilberte's letters, is hauled by Ruiz above a salon society gorging on petty gossip, and suspended in front of a projector screen showing grainy footage from the trenches. Marcel is joined by his younger, enthusiastic self, who is armed with a film camera aimed at the diners below.

*Time Regained* has at its disposal an arsenal of similarly phantasmagoric images and scenes marked by Ruiz's baroque and playful wit: Saint-Loup, fresh from fighting on the front, tells Marcel of the rejuvenating effect of being separated from women, of the love that the trenches have kindled in him for the "common people," and the hope that he will inspire fanatical love among his men (even though his section of salon society is filled with

"German lovers making merry in Paris"). His uncle, Baron de Charlus (a fabulously pouty John Malkovich), is suspected of spying for "Fritz" too, though he is more preoccupied with nursing his heart, which the pianist Charles Morel has broken.

And though the film generates some of its finest comedy when Charlus goes chasing after the young working-class boys fresh from the front, some of *Time Regained*'s most poignant moments involve the aging Baron: His look of hurt at Morel's snide response to his wish to spend every night and day with him is heartbreaking. Marcel's declaration to Gilberte's mother, the legendary courtesan Odette de Crecy, that if he was a sculptor he would use her as his model of an "allegory of eternal youth" (she's played by Catherine Deneuve, of course) is similarly affecting.

*Time Regained*'s last glorious movement takes place in a veritable house of the dead—the home of Prince de Guermantes—where the old aristos, reptilian and senile, bumble around,

barely recognizing each other. Traveling to this "carnage," Marcel, who has been absent from society due to illness, trips over a paving stone, experiencing a spiritual epiphany where he discovers his "extra-temporal" self, a new identity that helps him conquer his fear of death and overcome his literary inhibition.

Ruiz has claimed that his previous films were but a preparation for *Time Regained*. Hunt through the few Ruiz titles available on video in the United States and it is remarkable how *Time Regained* is visually and thematically foreshadowed, even in Ruiz's bizarre straight-to-video potboiler *Shattered Image*, which starred Billy Baldwin. But Ruiz has now been exposed to sunlight. The magician, who once had been a quiet, almost invisible presence in world cinema's shade, has now crossed into our world. ■

Carl Bromley writes about cinema and politics for *In These Times*, *Cineaste* and *The Nation*. He is the editor of the forthcoming *Cinema Nation: The Best Writing on Film from The Nation: 1913-2000*.



Buy NOW at our  
Special Price: \$24.95

- ☐ Payment enclosed  
☐ Bill me  
 Charge my ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

or call 1 (800) 827-0270

CARD NUMBER / EXP. DATE

SIGNATURE

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY / STATE / ZIP

A GIFT FROM (IF APPLICABLE)

## ☐ NEW SUBSCRIPTION

You'll receive your first issue in four to six weeks. Please check price and terms below. **AST2**

## ☐ MOVING?

Fill out your old address and new address below. Allow four to six weeks for the change.

## ☐ RENEW NOW

We'll extend your current subscription for as long as you like. This saves you worries about expiring and helps us save money and the environment by not sending renewal notices and bills. **ART2**

## ☐ GREAT GIFT IDEA!

Just try to find a gift with more thought behind it! Fill out the lucky person's name and address and sign your name below. We'll let them know who it's from. **XSTH2**

\*Canadian orders:  
 add \$25 (one year), \$12.50 (six months).  
 Other foreign orders:  
 add \$39 (one year), \$19.50 (six months).

# Classifieds

## HELP WANTED

**PROJECT DIRECTOR, NYC**  
Hospital Pollution Prevention  
Project: Seeking Director for NYC  
Health Care Without Harm cam-  
paign to educate/assist hospitals.  
Experience in health care, pollu-  
tion prevention or safety & health.  
Excellent organizational, leader-  
ship, writing, verbal and research  
skills. Health Benefit. Salary: 40s  
based on experience. EOE.  
Citizens' Environmental Coalition,  
33 Central Ave., Albany, NY  
12210, cecanne@igc.org.

## LABOR ORGANIZER

Progressive, Growing labor union  
hiring organizers. Requirements:  
passion for social justice and abil-  
ity to move people to action. Long  
hours and frequent travel.  
Competitive salary, excellent  
benefits. Union, community, or  
student activists preferred.

Women and people of color  
encouraged to apply. Serious  
commitment to struggle impera-  
tive. Liberals need not apply. Call  
614-461-1199 ex. 2003.

## GRANTS

**GRANTS \$500-\$5000 to INDI-  
VIDUAL WOMEN AGE 54+** for  
projects in any field that enrich  
and empower the lives of adult  
women. Write for instructions  
(include SASE). The Thanks Be  
To Grandmother Winifred  
Foundation/ITT, PO Box 1449,  
Wainscott, NY 11975.

## PUBLICATIONS

**CIA NOVEL: Mosca, a Facutal Fiction.**  
Available from Amazon.com

**CONTROVERSIAL POLITICAL  
Adventure Novel**  
www.oaklandstatement.com

## -Left Bank Distribution-

Labor, Anarchist & Situationist  
books, radical culture and politics.  
Worker owned collective since 1973.  
Send \$2 for our 90 page catalog to:  
1004 Turner Way E, Seattle, WA  
98112 or order online at  
<http://www.leftbankbooks.com>

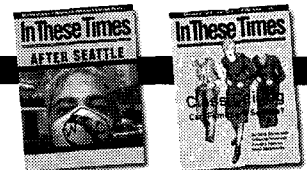
## Will callous, usurious, predatory PLUTOCRACIES LAST...FOREVER?

Read Sydney Spiegel's book,  
**ALL EMPIRES DIE!**  
(Order from your local or internet  
bookstore, \$13.95)

## PERSONALS

### CONCERNED SINGLES NEWSLETTER

links compatible singles who care  
about peace, social justice, gender  
equity, racism and the environment.  
*Nationwide. Since 1984. All ages.*  
FREE SAMPLE: ☎ Box 444-IT.  
Lenox Dale, MA 01242,  
☎ (413) 445-6309;  
or at <http://www.concernedsingles.com>



### In These Times Back Issues

\$3 US  
\$5 Overseas  
Call 773-772-0100

HISTORIC REPRINT of the 1936 Masterpiece...

## CHRISTIANITY'S SOCIAL RECORD

By Joseph McCabe,  
World-Famous Historical Scholar.

A concise, provocative fact-filled account showing  
how the Christian Church retarded human progress  
and reeked with vice and corruption from early  
times through the Reformation period; and that an  
indictment of ecclesiastical abuses was finally  
brought about by Deists, Skeptics and Atheists.

booklet \$6.00 ppd. (USA)

INDEPENDENT PUBLICATIONS, P.O. BOX 102,  
RIDGEFIELD, NJ 07657



Check out  
**IN THESE TIMES**  
on the Web at  
[www.inthesetimes.com](http://www.inthesetimes.com)



## Read The Progressive Populist

A Journal from the Heartland with alternative  
news and views from Jim Hightower, Molly Ivins,  
Ralph Nader, Jesse Jackson, other muckrakers,  
agitators and the best of the nation's alternative  
press. . . . An antidote for your daily news. . . .  
Deflating pompous plutocrats since 1995.

Only \$29.95 for 22 issues.  
For a free sample copy,  
call toll-free 1-800-205-7067  
or see [www.populist.com](http://www.populist.com)

## SYLVIA

The SYLVIA  
School of  
Mystery  
Writing



the Lonely  
Detective  
and the  
case of  
the Bogus  
Hard  
Drives

7-25

[www.nicolehollander.com](http://www.nicolehollander.com)

MY OLD PAL JOEY AMBLED INTO MY OFFICE CARRYING TWO  
PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS. "I GOT THESE REAL CHEAP OFF A  
GUY AT THE CHECK-OUT COUNTER...THEY'RE THOSE HARD  
DRIVES THAT WENT MISSING AT LOS ALAMOS...WORTH BIG  
BUCKS. YOU WANT A PIECE OF THE ACTION?" "I DON'T  
THINK SO," I SAID. "THEY FOUND THOSE WEEKS AGO."  
"DON'T THEY WISH," HE SAID SLYLY. HE PULLED TWO BOXES  
OUT OF THE BAGS...THEY WERE LABELED "TOP SECRET  
HARD DRIVES - LOS ALAMOS". WELL, I COULDN'T ARGUE  
WITH THAT! "I'M IN," I SAID, TAKING OUT MY WALLET.



By Nicole Hollander



Continued from page 38

I remember the old days on Jim Phelps' team. Team wasn't just a buzzword back then—it was the reality. You worked with the same people, year in, year out. A safe-house had a real community feeling to it back then; it felt, I don't know, *safe*. OK, if things were so great, why did Jim kill the whole team and sell out the agency? Look, I'm not condoning what he did. But I remember something he told me just before I killed him. The Cold War is over, he said. "You realize you're an obsolete piece of hardware not worth upgrading. You've got a lousy marriage. Sixty-two grand a year." Senior guy, 26 years. And how many assassinations foiled? Doesn't matter. It's still *if you're caught or killed the Secretary will disavow all knowledge of your actions*. I guess Jim got tired of hearing that.

After the Phelps business, Human Resources was all over us. Trauma counseling, then an agency-wide "reconnecting" retreat. Everyone had to do a trust-fall. But it didn't mean a damn thing after they brought in the consultants from Ernst & Young.

Think of the Impossible Mission Force as a "virtual organization," they said. IMF didn't have a product or even a service; it just carried out one-of-a-kind missions in a global environment where "change is the only constant." Virtual organization, virtual staff. Payroll would be pared down to a handful of on-call "super-agents," who would recruit teams from the international pool of freelance computer hackers, jewel thieves and demolition experts—ultracheap now, with the glut of ex-KGB and Stasi on the spot-market. To rein in workers' comp costs the whole industry was moving to a contingent labor profile, and we had to follow—or die.

Now for each new mission I have to do my own recruiting and payroll (no extra salary, natch). We're basically a temp agency. HR doesn't like that term. They say we're a "human assets portfolio" that's "actively traded." I ask them how we expect people to risk their lives when we give them no job security, no benefits. They tell me that risk is not a problem, it's an opportunity. Everyone should expect to have at least seven careers; job security is a thing of the past. We have to find other ways to get people to buy into our vision. We're a learning organization. The skill set our partners take away from an investment of time with us yields a high return in the marketplace. And if I don't like it, I am, after all, a free agent.

Sean Ambrose just ate it up. He started listening to these Tom Peters lectures on tape, *Thriving on Chaos*. "Grrreat stoooff!" he'd bray in that moronic burr of his. I thought he was

just sucking up to Hannibal (our new boss—another Brit). Hannibal is totally into that leadership garbage; he had these "Agent Change" T-shirts made up for us to wear at the quality circle. There are some aspects I agree with. Sean gave me this one Peters tape, *Brand You*—how we're not workers anymore, we're brands, and there are no employers, just companies who want to buy your brand. I liked that. I've always thought of myself that way, if not in exactly those terms; as something unique that you couldn't get from anyone else. The Point Man. The Go-To Guy. I even have a sort of brand motto, "Zero Body Count," because I'm a fanatic about collateral damage. (They should put *that* in the Customer Bill of Rights.)

But now we're experiencing some colossal blowback. Sean got hold of a doomsday virus. (He scammed it by impersonating me, with a standard-issue latex mask and voice simulator. What's the point of self-branding with all that interchangeable-identity gear lying around?) He's shopping around the antidote in exchange for biotech stock options. "Does that *surprise* you, Mr. Hunt?" Hannibal asked me at the briefing. He didn't seem all that shocked about it himself. And I guess it really doesn't surprise me that one of our top agents has set up shop as



## *Goodbye, Mr. Secret Agent—Hello, Independent Contractor.*

a super-terrorist holding millions of lives hostage for ransom. After all, we're the ones who drummed it into him that things like loyalty and stable employment are dead and buried, that your only chance in life is to make a killing in the market. He's just doing what we trained him to do.

HR is in damage-control overdrive. They're revamping the interview process, developing a new personality-type indicator. They think they'll finally be able to distinguish the violent, impulsive nihilists they want to screen out from the violent, impulsive altruists they want to hire. And they're trying to "tailor a compensation package that can really compete" (with a career in bio-terrorism). They even promised me more vacation days. I've heard *that* before.

So there's this woman in a bar last night. We get to talking. I should have spotted her. Before I know it she's slipping me an AFSCME card. Says her sources tell her there are issues at IMF. Pay issues. Overtime issues. *Big time* OSHA issues. I tell her to run, disappear—she doesn't realize who she's up against, what they're capable of. She laughs. "I've seen it all," she says. "Borders. Wal-Mart. The Yale TAs. You're public sector. A walk in the park." She leans in close, puts the pen in my hand. "C'mon sweetie," she murmurs. "Solidarity is forever." ■

# Mission: Impossible 3

By Bill Boisvert



## Should you choose to accept it.

I love that little disclaimer. Hey, when you're dangling from a cable car or donating your kidneys to a South African mercenary, just remember *it's your choice*. Nobody forced you to be here. Of course, they don't spell out what happens if you choose *not* to accept it. Then it's Goodbye, Mr. Secret Agent—Hello, Mr. Independent Contractor.

This time the helicopter guys show up right in the middle of my *scheduled* vacation. They're using exploding sunglasses now, a spin-off of that wearable computing kick.

That's typical of their whole approach to technology: lots of bells and whistles, no concern whatsoever for operator safety. Granted, the cassettes were bulky, but at least they didn't leave a smoking crater in your forehead. The boss didn't even say what it was about—just return immediately, world ending. And before I can even say, "Hey guys, can I get a ride in your helicopter or should I walk?"—*whoosh*, they're out of there. I actually did bring that up at headquarters, but they said messaging's been outsourced, and the new vendor contract doesn't include transport.

Bond doesn't have to deal with this crap. MI6 has phenomenal administrative services—in-house. Passports, cover IDs, reservations, Moneypenny takes care of it. And the tech support—no comparison. Look at Bond's new glasses—X-ray lenses, state of the art; he walks

into a casino and knows instantly who's packing firepower under their dinner jacket. That's technology that empowers the user.

Of course, Bond just uses them to get a line on what underwear the ladies are wearing (or not wearing, as he never fails to add). On his last job, they gave him an Aston Martin convertible—

titanium armor, twin multi-pod rocket launchers. (You know what they gave me on my last job? A stick of exploding chewing gum. "Just don't chew it!" they said, like I'm 6 years old.) Bond

totalled it, as usual, but MI6 doesn't give a damn, they just tussle his hair, buy him a new one, their own little Prince William.

He's a complete asshole, a one-man hostile environment, but it's like he has tenure. That's Europe, everything's cradle-to-grave over there.

*Continued on page 37*

ILLUSTRATION: MIKE WERNER